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CHARLES SCHULZ
Interview

by Rick Marschall and Gary Groth

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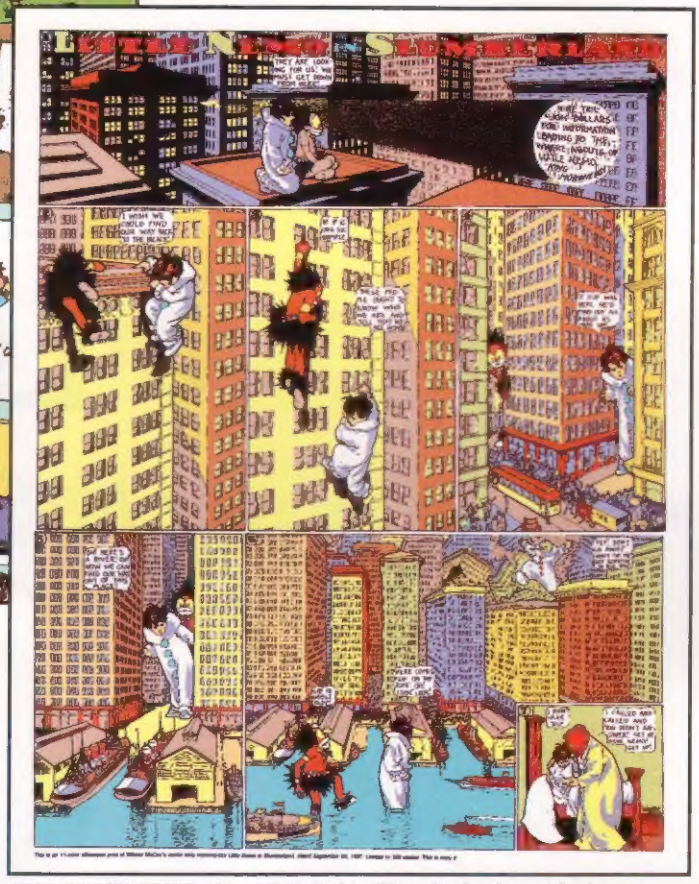

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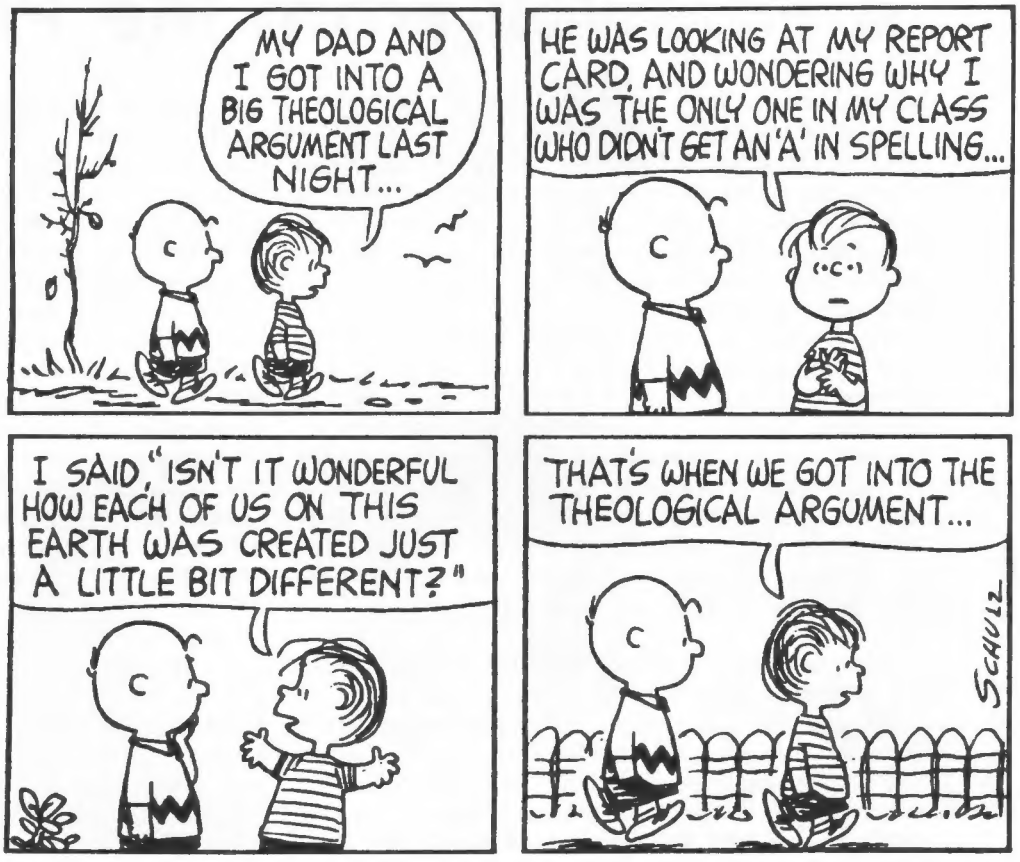
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I SAID, "ISN'T IT WONDERFUL HOW EACH OF US ON THIS EARTH WAS CREATED JUST A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT?"
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CHARLES SCHULZ

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Art Directors: Linda Owens, Mark Thompson
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EDITORIAL

A Farewell From the Publishers

Welcome and goodbye.

Yes, this is the final issue of *NEMO: The Classic Comics Library* (at least for the foreseeable future). We would like to take this opportunity to 1) grovel in abject apology to faithful *NEMO* readers, especially those of you who are subscribers and have been expecting this issue for years, and 2) recount the glory and privilege of publishing *NEMO* these past nine years.

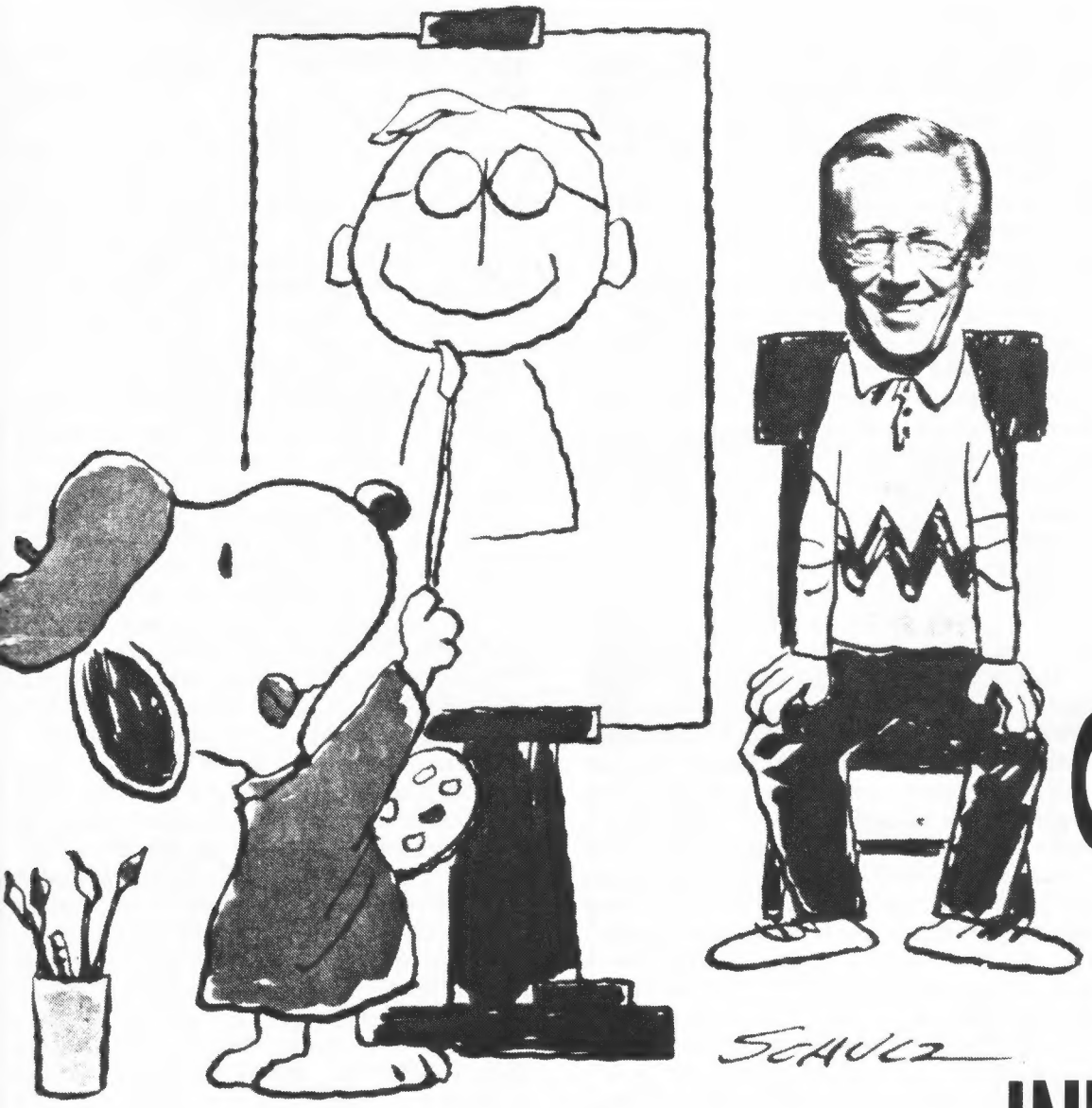
First things first. The last issue of *NEMO* came out in early '89, single-handedly giving a whole new meaning to the term *periodical*. We don't know if this is a record in publishing, but it's got to come close. In all seriousness, we wish to apologize to our readers whose patience has exceeded any reasonably human limit. We are, to put it bluntly, as mystified as you no doubt are as to exactly why this issue took so long to put together and publish. We realize this may make us look somewhat inattentive at best or complete bloody idiots at worst, but this is the capsule version of our story.

This issue was scheduled for late 1989. Rick Marschall, who has done a superlative job of editing *NEMO* since its inception in 1983 (but we'll get to that later) promised the editorial contents to us by late '89. (Typically, Rick would send us the manuscripts and the art; we would typeset and design the book in our offices, print and ship it.) Rick sent nothing to us in 1989; Rick sent nothing to us in 1990; Rick, rather anti-climactically at this point, sent nothing to us in 1991. We would call. We would wait. We called. We badgered. We waited. We called. We prayed. We waited. Nothing. Our prayers remained unanswered. We were geting paranoid. We envisioned conspiracies. Rick is a devout Christian; he has the inside track. Nonetheless, we had an epiphany. It was as if Horatio Alger walked through our door and said, "Gentlemen, you must pull yourselves up by your bootstraps." It finally had penetrated our thick publishers' skulls that there would be no *NEMO* #31 if we did not edit it ourselves. At this point we abandoned our heretofore failed strategy of frantic monthly phone calls to the editor accompanied by the standard wheedling and nudging, Luckily, Marschall and Groth had interviewed Charles Schulz several years earlier (the interview was, ahem, meant to be timely and had appeared, inexplicably, in a French magazine a couple of years ago!), which was transcribed by us and on hand. Thierry Groensteen's essay was being dutifully transcribed by Dwight Decker. But, what else? Groth called upon his friends Cliff and Ed and Harv. Kim Thompson copy-edited and looked forlorn. You're holding the happy ending in your hands.

NEMO has , in its last 30 issues, published a breathtaking amount of the best cartooning the world has ever seen. Frank King. George Herriman. E.C. Segar. Winsor McCay. J.R. Williams. Gluyas Williams (no relation). Harry J. Tuthill. Franklin Booth. Carl Barks. Floyd Gottfredson. Clare Briggs. Harold Gray. George McManus. Gustave Verbeek. Charles Dana Gibson. James Montgomery Flagg. Frank Willard. Joseph Clement Coll. Chester Gould. Alex Raymond. Jack Kent. Percy Crosby. John Held, Jr. Jimmy Swinnerton. Rube Goldberg. Garrett Price. Ferd Johnson. Even Norman Rockwell. And let us not forget William Faulkner. It's a list that would make the most blase swoon. A run of *NEMO*'s is an education in the history and aesthetics of cartooning in the 20th century.

Prior to *NEMO* there was never a magazine like it; during its run there was never a competitor in sight. Rick Marschall deserves the credit for a spectacular job of editing it; since he's not around to pat us on the back, we'll just take the credit for publishing it, gladly. It was a hell of a run and we hope you enjoyed it as much as we did.

—The Publishers



CHARLES SCHULZ INTERVIEW

An Interview With America's Most Enduring Contemporary Cartoonist

by
RICK MARSCHALL
&
GARY GROTH

RICK MARSCHALL: *I wonder if you realize how deep an impact* Peanuts *has had on your readers.*

CHARLES SCHULZ: No, actually I'm very surprised. And I always kind of worry about it because I realize that I'm in a medium where it's dangerous to stick your head out because there are so many people that simply don't read the comics and still don't regard it as worthwhile entertainment. There's nothing that annoys me more than somebody coming up to me and saying, "My nineteen year old daughter really loves your strip and she *still* reads it." Because that's the audience that I'm really going for. And another thing that bothers me is the parents who come up to me with their two- or three-year-old child on their shoulder and say, "Look, you know who this is? It's *Peanuts*'s father" and the poor kid and I look at each other and the kid has no idea what the mother and father are talking about and it really bothers me. Beyond that, I kind of keep to myself and try not to think about that. When people say to me, "I really admire your philosophy," I literally and honestly do not know what they are talking about because I don't even know what my philosophy is.

MARSCHALL: *They try to read something into the strip.*

SCHULZ: Which is all right. I think that even minor art forms like this, as Robert Short tried to talk about in *The Gospel According to Peanuts*, do have certain truths in them, and I think that's important, and I think that people should be able to read whatever they want to into what they're looking at or reading. But as far as an overall philosophy goes, I'm really not sure what it is. Although I try to draw a gentle strip. I try to draw a strip which doesn't have any real cruelty in it, outside of things like Lucy pulling away the football. And it's not as insulting a strip as it used to be. Of course, I've gotten older, and I'm not as insulting as I used to be myself.

MARSCHALL: *You don't consciously put your philosophy in it like Harold Gray did in* Little Orphan Annie, *but it's obviously a reflection of yourself.*

I'd like to ask about your background. I know you grew up in St. Paul. Your name is Schulz. Isn't that German? Do you have any ethnic flavor in your background, or has your family been here for many generations?

SCHULZ: My dad was born in Germany, but he was the only one in the family who was. Apparently, his parents went over on a year's vacation or something back to Germany, where he was born, but his brothers and sisters were all born in this country. My mother was one of nine children, and I always regarded myself really as being Norwegian, and not German. I think I was a little bit ashamed of being German, due to World War I, and always played that down. I never think about nationalities, and I know my own children don't think of nationalities: If you were to ask them what nationality they are, I think they are probably the first generation who would now say American.

My dad was a barber. I always admired him for the fact that both he and my mother had only third grade educations and, from what I remembered hearing in conversations, he worked pitching hay in Nebraska one summer to earn enough money to go to barber school, got himself a couple of jobs and eventually bought his own barber shop. And I think he at one time owned two barber shops and a filling station, but that was either when I was not born or very small, so I don't know much about that. But, of course, I was raised during the Depression struggle, which didn't affect me personally, because I don't think little kids are into what's going on. If you have pancakes for dinner, you think that's wonderful because you like pancakes. You don't realize that you're probably having them because your parents can't afford anything more.

But my dad ran a three chair barber shop...

MARSCHALL: *Ran it through the Depression?*

SCHULZ: Right through the Depression. I know at one point he was seven months behind on his rent, but he told me years later it didn't matter because the big building where his barber shop was had so many empty spaces in it that the landlord didn't really care, as long as he kept up as much as he could on the rent. But I always admired him for being a self-employed person who loved his work. I remember his telling me several times that he loved to get up in the morning and go to work, and I think he was as totally at home in the barber shop as I am off doodling in my studio. Years later, I began to realize that a lot of this being at home in your place of work is not necessarily because you love it so much, but because you're secure there, and he probably had the same travel fears that I have. But he was incapable of expressing them and I knew about it, and I never had a chance to talk about these things with him. I don't know how much my dad made, but I never felt that I wanted anything. I had a baseball glove and a bicycle, for which my dad paid $24 and paid for it at the rate of four dollars a week at Western Auto. And we had the car. We never had a new car, but....

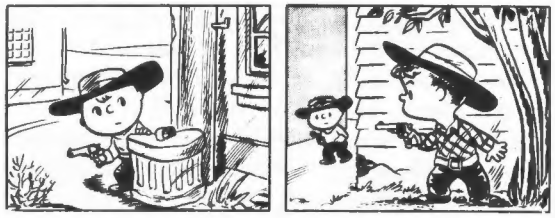
MARSCHALL: *Did you have friends whose families suffered through the Depression?*

SCHULZ: We never knew. You know, you're just little kids and you're playing cops and robbers and cowboys and indians and you organize your baseball games. There was no little league at that time, so all of our baseball games were between neighborhood teams. We would make up our own teams and challenge another neighborhood. We literally did lose a game once 40 to 0, which is where I got the idea for Charlie Brown's string of losses.

The highlight of our lives was, of course, Saturday afternoons, going to the local theatre. We would buy a box of popcorn for a nickel from a popcorn shop a few stores down from the theatre and then we'd go to the afternoon matinee. My favorite movie, I still remember, was *Lost Patrol* with Victor McLaglen. I loved those desert movies, which is why I like drawing Snoopy as the foreign legionnaire. We never went *downtown* to a movie to a first run theatre. I think first run theatres were about 35 cents. If we went downtown on Sunday night to a movie, it was always to a double feature where the theatre only charged 15 cents per person.

MARSCHALL: *I remember a J.R. Williams cartoon showing a barber shop filled with 12 to 15 men sitting around with the barber; someone's passing on the sidewalk and the barber sees him through the glass and says "You're next," meaning that was a place where they congregated and it's not necessarily for a hair cut. Was your father's barber shop like that? Did you hang around and listen to stories?*

SCHULZ: No. My father never ran the sort of shop where men would sit around and tell what you would call dirty stories. His shop was called the Family Barber Shop and he didn't allow that sort of thing. But if he did rap on the window and say to somebody "You're next," he literally meant that "Come on in because I got it figured out and it won't be too long a wait." He worked hard and I have nothing but admiration and love and memories of that.



MARSCHALL: *Was St. Paul in the '20s and '30s anything like Garrison Keillor or Jean Shepherd's stories about growing up in a midwestern town?*

SCHULZ: I don't know Shepherd and I've only heard four of the Keillor tapes, but that was different. He's talking about small towns. St. Paul is not a small town. I always thought of myself as growing up, really, in the city. So I always regarded myself as a city boy. I grew up on the sidewalks, not in the country.

MARSCHALL: *You were never tempted to make* Peanuts *a city strip?*

SCHULZ: I don't know where the *Peanuts* kids live. I think that, originally, I thought of them as living in these little veteran's developments, where Joyce and I first lived when we got married out in Colorado Springs. Now I don't think about it at all. My strip has become so abstract and such a fantasy that I think it would be a mistake to point out a place for them to live.

MARSCHALL: *Your backgrounds are pretty sparse, too. You've never committed yourself with tract homes or anything.*

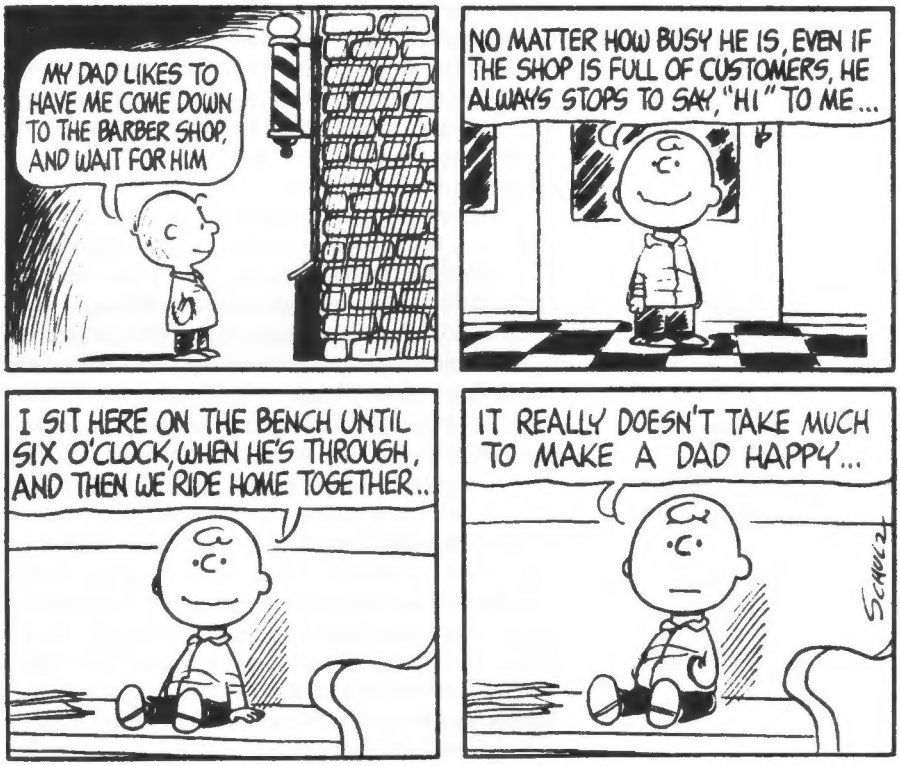
SCHULZ: No, I've never been able to reconcile just how those backgrounds should be drawn, or even the interiors. I admire people who can do that well. I'm never quite sure how it should be done. I fight it all the time.

MARSCHALL: *Segar used to do that little roof just hanging a little bit over the horizon—every horizon. Speaking of Segar, I would like to draw you out a little bit on the strips you grew up with, the special favorites of yours.*

SCHULZ: Well, *Popeye*, of course. I could draw a great Popeye when I was a kid. And I could draw Mickey Mouse. I could draw the three little pigs, and, strangely enough, I used to like the black panthers that Lyman Young drew in *Tim Tyler's Luck*. You know, I was thinking about it today: When I was, I suppose, about 11—maybe 12, I'm not sure—I didn't really realize the value of drawing. I remember visiting some relatives one night who lived down in Stillwater, Minnesota or Hudson, Wisconsin. Our parents were talking and the boy, who was a couple of years older than I, showed me his looseleaf binder. He had drawn some cowboys on the front of it and he was proud of them and I looked at them and thought, "That's kind of neat." And all of a sudden it occurred to me, I could do that. Why hadn't I ever thought of drawing something on the cover of a looseleaf binder? I started to do that, and, of course, when the other kids in my class saw me draw these things, then I had to draw them for everybody. It was a lot like autographing these days, it drove me crazy. So I didn't really know the joy at the time of drawing, or what you really could do with it.

And I remember, when I was about in the tenth grade, I think, in high school, one of the other guys in class, who was a much better student than I, had illustrated the essay that we were supposed to write. He had done some watercolors and the teacher posted them around the room. And somehow she found out that I could draw, and she said, "Why didn't you do that, Charles?" The reason I didn't do it was because I didn't think it was fair. I really thought that maybe myself and a couple of the others were the only ones in the class who could draw and it wouldn't be fair to do something like that. And I was stunned that this teacher gave me a mild dressing down for not doing it. So it took me a long time to realize the value of drawing.

I'm always surprised at how few people can draw. Down through the years, there were never more than two or three people in any of my classes that could draw fairly well. And in my three years in the Army, I bet I never saw one person in any of the companies or platoons I was in that could draw better than I could—and I've never considered myself that good. There aren't very many people who can draw. I don't think you can learn how to draw. I think you can be given a few tips. Talking about comic strips, you can learn a few things that can make your strip look better and give it a better appearance and all that, but I don't think you can learn how to draw, just like I don't think you can learn how to sing. Either you have a voice, or you don't have a voice. It's not learning how to play tennis or golf or anything like that.


MY DAD LIKES TO HAVE ME COME DOWN TO THE BARBER SHOP, AND WAIT FOR HIM
NO MATTER HOW BUSY HE IS, EVEN IF THE SHOP IS FULL OF CUSTOMERS, HE ALWAYS STOPS TO SAY, "HI" TO ME...
I SIT HERE ON THE BENCH UNTIL SIX O'CLOCK, WHEN HE'S THROUGH, AND THEN WE RIDE HOME TOGETHER..
IT REALLY DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO MAKE A DAD HAPPY...
SCHULZ

MARSCHALL: *Did you ever use your talent for drawing as some sort of power over your fellow students?*

SCHULZ: No. Never.

MARSCHALL: *I used to love to do caricatures of the kids who'd pick on me. They'd walk into the classroom and they would see, anonymously of course, a caricature I'd done of them on the board. I thought it was a great power over them.*

SCHULZ: No, I never really liked caricatures and I still don't to this day. I never did caricatures. If somebody has a big nose, I'm sure that they regret the fact they have big nose and who am I to point it out in gross caricature? So I don't do it. But, knowing how to draw has brought its moments of attention. I worked once at Northwest Printing and Binding as a delivery boy and office boy and one day, I drew a cartoon of the man who worked the big cutting machine and how proud he was when he got a new board to stand on. I was inspired, of course, by J.R. Williams and that type of down home type of humor. And I brought it down and showed it to him and, oh, he was so pleased with it and all the people that worked with him in the place came and looked at it. And, for the next hour,

I got lots of attention and that made me feel good. It did demonstrate a little bit of this kind of power that perhaps you were talking about.

MARSCHALL: *You mentioned* Popeye *and* Tim Tyler's Luck *and I know you've written about being a fan of Roy Crane's. Were you drawn as a kid to the continuity strips?*

SCHULZ: I read them all. I liked every comic strip. *Skippy*, of course, was fan-tas-tic. Although I couldn't understand why [Percy Crosby] was so careless in his later years. He didn't even take the time to rule out the panels that were on the strip. That baffled me. There were a lot of things that baffled me when I was smaller which I didn't understand. I loved *Buck Rogers*. That was one of my favorite strips. Years later, I read one of the reprint books and discovered how terrible it really was. It wasn't a good strip at all. But it was ahead of its time and that puts some value into it, being ahead of your time.

Later on, as I grew older, in my last year of high school in the correspondence school, I became acquainted with some of the other great cartoonists and if that course did nothing else, it taught me to value good drawing in comics and good penwork. Clare Briggs, I thought, was wonderful and as far as writing, I alway thought *The Bungle Family* was a great strip. And a couple of months ago, I spoke at a meeting or gathering here in Berkeley of some people who wanted to become syndicated and I opened my little speech by saying "How many people have ever heard of Charles Payne? Raise your hand." Nobody raised their hand. I said, "Charles Payne drew *S'matter Pop*, and if you don't know *S'matter Pop*, frankly, I don't think I even want to talk to you." Because *S'matter Pop* is obviously one of the great strips of all time, beautifully drawn, and so funny. I like that and *Hairbreadth Harry*, I remember I loved *Hairbreadth Harry*. It annoyed me because Rudolph Rasendale was always so mean. And then, of course, later on, Al Capp came along with *Li'l Abner* and I loved *Li'l Abner* and then when Milton Caniff came along and put in the wrinkles where the wrinkles were supposed to be and shot all the camera angles and drew German Lugers the way they were supposed to look, it was a real revelation. There was nothing wrong with the way Chester Gould drew *Dick Tracy*; that was wonderful, too. But Caniff had this unique approach. As I look back upon it now, I don't think his strip was as witty as it could have been, but the drawing was marvelous. It was pure comic strip drawing, which we've never had quite enough of. It was marvelous. So those were all my heroes.

MARSCHALL: *Is there anyone else, maybe a certain period, that you wanted to draw like?*

SCHULZ: I emulated Roy Crane when I was in my late teens, before I went into the Army. I tried to draw a strip which was similar to that and I used to observe downtown areas in St. Paul as I walked around delivering packages for these printing companies that I worked for—where would be a good setting for some action and I would try to draw it that way and my drawing was improving, but I had a long way to go. Then, after World War II, when I came home, *Krazy Kat* became my hero. I had never seen *Krazy Kat* up until then because neither one of the papers in the Twin Cities published it, so I didn't know *Krazy Kat*. But then it became my ambition to draw a strip that would have as much life and meaning and subtlety to it as *Krazy Kat* had.

MARSCHALL: *Your nickname is Sparky, and that's after Barney Google's horse Spark Plug. Is that because* Barney Google *was your favorite strip, or did you just get the nickname?*

SCHULZ: Well, I am told the day after I was born, an uncle, whom I never met [again] until I was 25 years old, came to visit my mother and me, looked down at me and said, "By golly, we are going to call him 'Spark Plug'." Years later, I discovered that Spark Plug came into the strip in the middle of the summer of 1922 and I was born in November, so apparently Spark Plug was an instant hit, in probably the most famous strip of its day. My mother and dad from then on called me Sparky. I was never called by them Charles. I was called Charles in school or other places, but all my friends and relatives referred to me as Sparky.

MARSCHALL: *Right from the start.*

SCHULZ: Right from the start, I was doomed. [*Barney Google*] was a great strip, you know, and I think that when Snuffy Smith first came in, it was wildly funny. I remember reading a reprint comic book of Snuffy Smith when he was first drafted. I used to just laugh at the things Snuffy said.

MARSCHALL: *That was a great strip—one of the strips that deserves to be reprinted. Great storytelling, characters that work. I never liked the Snuffy Smith period until recently. I acquired a run of Sundays when he first came into the strip. I don't know if you remember when he'd do these big splash panels with hillbilly landscape and hundreds of hillbillies hanging around making wood shavings and stills and all this kind of stuff. Beautiful, beautiful drawings.*

SCHULZ: I don't know where the guys had the time to draw those. I've been looking at some of the *Popeye* books that you've published and those are enormous Sunday pages—and then to draw the daily strip, I don't know how they did it. I guess they didn't have to bother about licensing.

MARSCHALL: *That's one thing. . .*

SCHULZ: And they didn't have to write television shows and they didn't have to autograph things. . .

GARY GROTH: *Or grant interviews.*

SCHULZ: . . . grant interviews, yeah. But they must have had somebody help them. I don't see how they could have done it.

GROTH: *Can you talk a little about the current state of the strips. Are there strips you like?*

SCHULZ: No. [*laughter*].

GROTH: *I know you're not wild about the current propensity for one-panel strips. . . .*

SCHULZ: Yeah. It was a strange direction. I think Bob Thaves with his feature *Frank and Ernest* is good, and I suppose he was one of the first to do it, and that's perfectly all right. But now, I was looking at our own local comic page the other night —five features were one panel comic strips. And several weeks before that, six of them were just one long panel. I don't know. It puzzles me. Is it the shrinkage of space or what is it, but it's a bad trend. I don't think that you really build up a group of characters that way. And that's what a cartoonist is going to achieve. Something should be done about it.

GROTH: *Are you fond of Gary Larson's* The Far Side*?*

SCHULZ: Oh, yeah, he's good. He has a unique approach and he draws funny. I like the way the eyeballs are always close together. He draws funny animals and funny people. But I do resent that he is being labelled as the "new far-out humor."

MARSCHALL: *These are the '80s. I was on a book tour with a Dr. Seuss Book and the magazine stuff he was doing in the '20s is a lot like Gary Larson's—strange animals, bizarre situations.*

GROTH: *Do you find the current state of the strips despairing?*

SCHULZ: I think the profession is heading in a strange way.

GROTH: *Do you have any theories as to why?*

SCHULZ: Oh, I suppose the number one problem would be space, that we just don't have space on which to work any more. A lot of the people don't know how to adapt to that space. And then, it's the following trends. One person does one thing and pretty soon, all syndicates are hiring people to do the same thing. I think. . . I don't know if I should take credit for it or not, there seems to be a lot of what they call "sophisticated humor," with characters saying meaningful things, but in so many of them the character at the end does not say anything meaningful, it's just dumb. It just lays there. The person doesn't have the knack to do that kind of thing.

MARSCHALL: *Has the craft gone out of strips today? You have unique pen lines, thick and thin—I don't know what point you use, but it's like a fingerprint. A lot of cartoonists nowadays seem to think it's easier to use a rapidograph or a felt-tip pen or something like that. I don't think it necessarily reproduces better, and a lot of personality goes out of it.*

SCHULZ: But if you use that kind of pen, you have no thickness at all. If you use felt pens, the lines are just thicker, that's all. Of course it's quicker—you don't have to dip in—but I was a great student of pen techniques back when I worked at Art Construction. My friend and I used to do what we called Bart pen demonstrations. The author of the original cartoon course was Charles Bartholomew and he used to send out what he called "Bart pen demonstrations," which was a little card that had three sets of three pen lines, very thin, medium, and thick, all done with the same pen. And my friend and I used to practice making those when we had nothing else to do. We used to see if we could do three sets of perfect pen lines with the space between the pen lines narrower than the line itself [*laughter*]. It was like the surgeon practicing with his scalpel. So, I became really pretty deft with the pen. Now my hands shake and that spoils some of my pen techniques, but sometimes, I can still do it.

MARSCHALL: *That's characteristic, too.*

SCHULZ: No, [*laughter*] what is funny is that when they try to get someone helping with the licensing or something else, they copy my work and they copy this shaky pen line and say, "Gee, that's nice. How do you do that?" I don't do it on purpose—my hands shake. [*laughter*]

GROTH: *I was wondering what you thought of Walt Kelly's work.*

SCHULZ: I thought near the end, it became boring. I loved the older work and I bought every *Pogo* book that came out. I bought the comic magazine and I read it and I was influenced by it, and I would imitate his way of talking in it, the same way as when I was a kid, I would imitate Al Capp's hillbilly way of talking. But near the end, it got so wordy that I would buy the books and read the first few pages of it and just couldn't get through it. It wasn't funny any more. It's always a shame when people get so caught up with trying to give out their messages that they forget they have to be funny and entertaining. But he sure could draw. I only got to meet Walt once, I just said a few words to him one night at the Reuben Awards. I never really got to know him.

GROTH: *I was wondering if you paid any attention to the underground comics of the late '60s.*

SCHULZ: I stopped reading comic magazines years ago. I got so totally bored with them, with the super-heroes, all the muscles—the drawings all looked alike, and I just never read any of them. I never read any underground comics. What was strange about them was they pretended to be so different and they all turned out to be the same. They all used the same vulgar expressions and things. I got acquainted with a few of them from the Bay area and I said, "You guys pretend to do something so great and think what we're all doing is so bland, but actually, what I'm doing is infinitely more difficult than what you're doing. I'm

drawing something that is good, but is clean and decent and I'm not bothering anybody and I'm not hurting anybody. And I said, 'I defy you to do that'." They draw the same dirty pictures with the same dirty expressions and pretty soon, they're all alike. What's so great about that? I admit that some of them are good—Crumb is good—but that has never interested me. Besides, you get back to spirituality. I've always been very grateful for what has happened to me and I think it would be ungrateful of me to use whatever sensibilities I have for wrong. So I've always been very careful about that.

GROTH: *Were you familiar with Harvey Kurtzman's work?*

SCHULZ: Oh, sure, sure.

GROTH: *Did you like it?*

SCHULZ: I'm just familiar with it. A lot of them are wonderful. And the guys who used to draw for *MAD* magazine were sensational. Boy, some of them can draw.

GROTH: *Are you at all familiar with Carl Barks?*

SCHULZ: Oh, sure. But I never saw them when I was a kid, and I don't know why. I never read any Barks.

GROTH: *Did you read comic books when you were a kid?*

SCHULZ: Oh, I not only read them, I bought every one that came out. I had the original first *Famous Funnies* that came out. Some stupid friends of mine tore the cover off it and it disappeared. But I had it for years. I used to buy *Tip-Top Comics* and I can still remember the day when Superman came out in *Action Comics*. I took it over to a friend of mine and we though, wow. . . I knew this guy had something. The drawing was nice to look at. It wasn't as. . . .

MARSCHALL: *It was half cartoon.*

SCHULZ: It wasn't as slick as the latest *Superman*. But it was fun to look at. I knew that boy, this guy really had something.

GROTH: *Did the EC comics leave any impression on you?*

SCHULZ: What would that be?

GROTH: *Well, of course,* MAD *comic books. They had also published Harvey Kurtzman's. . . .*

SCHULZ: By then, I had stopped reading them. My own kids read *Archie* comics and that was about it. But I used to buy the Big Little Books, I bought every Big Little Book that came out until I got overwhelmed by them. I was the librarian in my neighborhood because the kids would come over and borrow my Big Little Books and my comics magazines [*laughter*]. All of my Big Little Books got lost in the fire in my dad's apartment.

MARSCHALL: *You've said that a lot of Charlie Brown's school experiences come from your school-age experiences.*

SCHULZ: Oh, yeah. It took me a long time to become a human being. I was regarded by many as kind of sissyfied, which I resented because I really was not a sissy. I was not a tough guy, but I was good at sports. I was a good baseball player. When I was 15, I became instantly a good ball-player. I was good at any sport where you threw things, or hit them, or caught them, or something like that. I hated things like swimming and tumbling and those kind of things, so I was really not a sissy. We never had the chance in those days to do some of the athletic things we wanted to because the coaches were so intolerant and there was no program for all of us. So I never regarded myself as being much and I never regarded myself as being good looking and I never had a date in high school, because I thought, who'd want to date me? So I didn't bother. And that's just the way I grew up.

I was telling somebody, I think it was just yesterday, that it wasn't until I came back from the war that I really had self-confidence, because I went into the Army as a nothing person, and I came out as a staff sergeant, squad leader of a light machine gun squad. And I thought, by golly, if that isn't a man, I don't know what is. And I felt good about myself and that lasted about eight minutes, and then I went back to where I am now.

MARSCHALL: *You've said it, and Al Capp and I guess a lot of text humorists have said it: The basis for humor is pain, suffering, or humiliation. You can intellectualize about that now, but when the strip started, did you see that as a formula?*

SCHULZ: No. When my strip first started, it was so totally different from what it is now that I don't even know what it was when it first started. I had experimented with many different types of features. I used to get on the train in St. Paul in the mornings at breakfast on the train and make that beautiful ride down to Chicago, get there about three in the afternoon, check into a hotel by myself, and the next morning I would get up and make the rounds of the syndicates. My first few trips, I really didn't have enough to show them and only one man treated me nicely. I met him years later and we talked about that and I was able to express to him my appreciation of how polite and nice he was, because some of the other syndicate people were very rude and most of them didn't even let me in the door. But as my work improved, I began to sell this thing called *Li'l Folks* to the St. Paul [*Pioneer Press*]. While I was doing this, I was also working at the art instruction correspondence school, drawing funny little figures, and I developed this three-panel strip which was unique in that what happened in the story was an incident that was only a couple of seconds. And so, when I sent in the panels that were finally accepted by United Features, I hadn't. . . .

MARSCHALL: *Excuse me, it was a panel? It wasn't a strip?*

SCHULZ: It was unique. This was something which nobody knows about, and it annoys me that the editor lost my original submissions. For years, he kept promising me he'd send them back and he never sent them back and somebody had them someplace and I would love to know who has them. Either that, or they got thrown away.

But I was looking for an angle. I figured if I'm going to break into this business, I've got to do something which is a little bit different. I had developed this very simple style of drawing and I took all of the best ideas that I sold to the St. Paul

paper and I re-drew them in a panel format. I took *Grin and Bear It* as my size to pattern after and, instead of drawing one single panel, I drew one above the other: I figured I'll be smart, I'll give the editor two cartoons for the price of one and this will be a good sales gimmick. So I sent it in and they were really good and I was very proud of them. And this is what the syndicate editor finally said to me: "We kind of like it. Would you like to come to New York and talk about it?" So, when I went to New York, I brought along a half dozen of these comic strips that I had been working on that I have been telling you about, which were really unique. . . .

MARSCHALL: *These were two tiers?*

SCHULZ: The panel was two tiers. It was called *Li'l Folks*. And that's what the syndicate editor saw in my submissions. But then when I went to New York, in person, I brought along these other things because I wanted to show what other things I could do. And they opened up that package while I was out having breakfast, and decided that they would rather have a strip. And then, [*laughter*] like syndicate people do, they began to fiddle around with it. The sales manager said, "How about if we make it even broader in its appeal and we have one little kid strip at the top and a teen-age strip at the bottom?" So I thought about it and said, "Oh, all right, I have to do what they tell me," so I did that and they really didn't care for the teen-age thing. And then they said, "We'll just have the kid thing." And then. . . I'm kind of lost now, as I tell this story, but somewhere in there, they decided that they'd rather have a strip, and right then was when they made this fateful decision that it was going to be a space-saving strip, which I have resented all my life. Now it may have gotten me started, but I'm not sure, so I had to overcome the fact that I was drawing a space-saving strip under the title *Peanuts*, which was the worst title ever thought up for a comic strip. It's totally ridiculous, has no meaning, is simply confusing, and has no dignity—and I think my humor has dignity. Those are two things that have hung over me and I've resented my whole career.

MARSCHALL: *Thirty-seven years hasn't softened that?*

SCHULZ: No, no. I hold a grudge, boy.

MARSCHALL: *By "space-saving strip," you mean that it was reproduced smaller than the average comic strip?*

SCHULZ: It was reproduced smaller, it was drawn in four equal panels so that it could be run vertically, horizontally, or in a square, two below two. Now, the ironic part of it is, about a year later, they came out with *Twin Earths*, which was enormous in its size, and *Long Sand*, which was also enormous in its size. Then they told me that newsprint is kind of short and we're having trouble and we think having this as a space-saving strip will help. Well, you know where *Long Sand* is and you know where *Twin Earths* is. I've always been proud of the fact that quality won out over size and space.

MARSCHALL: *You've kept to that four-panel square format, though you don't have to now.*

[EDITOR'S NOTE: In the years after this interview was conducted, Schulz converted the strip to three equal-sized panels and then began varying the panel size from strip to strip, a format that continues to this day.]

SCHULZ: I'm a great believer in loyalty. I'm not a believer in dictating to the newspaper editor how he should run my strip. And I've had some papers with me now for 36 years and they have run my strip in the same spot all this time and who am I suddenly to say "I'm too good to draw a small strip like this, I want more room, I want more space, I want more this or that." I believe in being loyal to these editors who have been loyal to you. And that's just the way I look at things. I don't want to break this agreement here and cause the editor to have to shuffle around everything that he's done and to change all of it.

GROTH: *How do you feel about [Garry] Trudeau's demanding more space [for* Doonesbury*]?*

SCHULZ: [*pause*] That he's not professional. He's never been professional.

GROTH: *How do you mean that?*

SCHULZ: I don't think he conducts himself in a

Li'l Folks
BY SPARKY
"MY BUDDY AND I LIKE TO THINK OF OURSELVES AS BEING SUCCESSFUL PRODUCTS OF THIS NEW POST-WAR WORLD!"
"I HATE THE THOUGHT THAT HALF OF MY LIFE PROBABLY WILL BE SPENT IN FRONT OF A MIRROR!"
"AM I RIGHT IN ASSUMING THAT TOMORROW IS THE DAY OF THE BIG GAME?"

professional manner in the things that he does.

MARSCHALL: *You're not just talking about the artistry on the strip?*

SCHULZ: It's his whole attitude toward the business.

GROTH: *You don't admire the strip.*

SCHULZ: [*shakes head*]

MARSCHALL: *You just talked about the title* Peanuts *and you've written about that before. Bill Anderson made a list of 10 names and* Peanuts *was chosen. Do you know where he'd come up with that?*

SCHULZ: Well, he told me, a couple of years afterward, "I never saw the strip. Somebody came to me and said: We're gonna start a new kids strip and we need a title. Can you think of anything?" He said, "I wrote down ten ideas and one of them was *'Peanuts'* and that's what they took."

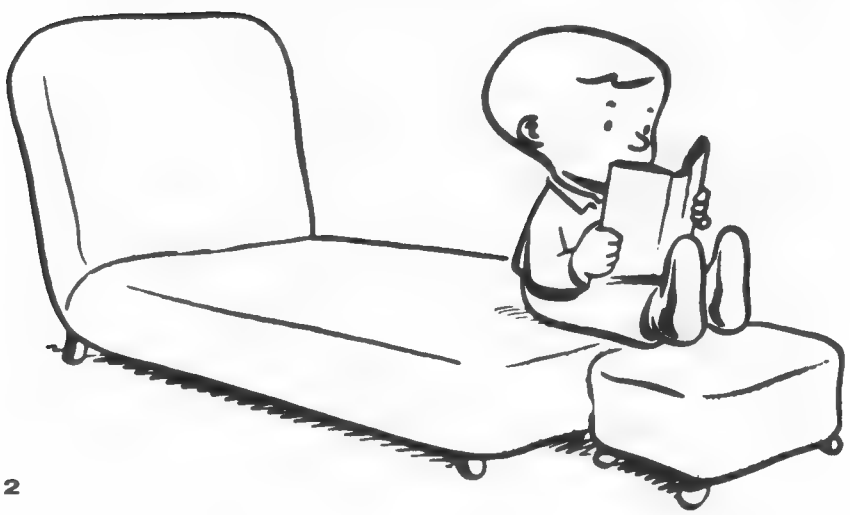
MARSCHALL: *Do you know where he got* Peanuts *from?*

SCHULZ: No.

MARSCHALL: *He told me it was because thinking of a kids' strip, a kid's milieu,* Howdy Doody *was the hottest thing on kids' TV at that time and where the kids sat in* Howdy Doody *was the Peanut Gallery. That seemed logical to him.*

SCHULZ: But you see what bothers me. In the first place, it has no dignity. I don't even like the word. It's not even a nice word. They didn't realize that I was going to draw a strip that I think has dignity. I think it has class. But, of course, and I've said this before, when a young person goes into the president's office, what that syndicate president is buying is the potential of this young person. He's not even buying the work that he is looking at, he's buying the potential 10, 20 years down the road, and how does he know? They didn't know when I walked in there that here was a fanatic. Here was a kid totally dedicated to what he was going to do. And to label then something that was going to be life's work with a name like *'Peanuts'* was really insulting.

Now, we'll go to the next step, which is that little kids are never called "peanuts" as they said they were. They never are. The only peanuts that are referred to is something that is insignificant, something with no color, or else it might be the nickname of a ball player or some little kid. And I said they're going to confuse Charlie Brown with the name "Peanuts." "No, no, no, no," they said. "No, no, it's just a catchy name that will attract the editors." So, what happens the very first year, I begin to get letters saying, "I love this new strip with Peanuts and his dog." Oh geez! That aggravates me.



MARSCHALL: *It astounds me it still happens. I have relatives who know I love comic books who say "I love that little boy, Peanuts."*

SCHULZ: I never mention [the name]. If someone asks me what I do, I always say, "I draw that comic strip with Snoopy in it, Charlie Brown and his dog."

MARSCHALL: *You've never pictured adults, parents or otherwise, in the strip. Maybe once or twice you've had the hand of an adult at a magazine counter or something like that. Was that something you set out to do?*

SCHULZ: Oh, I never thought about it at first. It was the way I drew the characters, they filled up the strip and I drew them from the side view. The type of humor that I was using did not call for camera angles. I liked drawing the characters from the same view all the way through because the ideas were very brief and I didn't want anything in the drawing to interrupt the flow of what the characters were either saying or doing. So there became no room for adults in the strip. At one point, I think, years and years ago, I drew a whole bunch of adults in a gallery where Lucy was playing in a golf tournament which is something I never should have done. But it was an experiment.

MARSCHALL: *In the background?*

SCHULZ: Yeah, in the background. I drew these adults. I never should have done that. And then I used to have off-stage voices, which again was simply because I didn't know how to handle it. Now, the strip has become so abstract that the introduction of an adult would destroy it because you can't have an adult in a strip where a dog is sitting on a doghouse, pretending he's chasing the Red Baron. It just doesn't work. So, it's taken all these years really to learn some of these things. You make mistakes, but fortunately it's a medium that allows for mistakes if you recognize them right away. It's possible, I think, to make a mistake in the strip and without realizing it, destroy it. My best example, I think, and this will surprise you, I think Eugene the Jeep was a mistake. I think Eugene the Jeep took the life out of Popeye himself, and I'm sure Segar didn't realize that. I realized it myself a couple of years ago when I began to introduce Snoopy's brothers and sisters. I realized that when I put Belle and Marbles in there it destroyed the relationship that Snoopy has with the kids, which is a very strange relationship. And these things are so subtle when you're doing them, you can make mistakes and not realize them. You've got to watch that very carefully. What made Popeye great was that he solved all his problems by whopping somebody, but then by having Eugene the Jeep be able to predict the future and do all of these things, I think, was just the wrong direction. And once you go there, it's almost impossible to pull back. I think the Jeep was a great idea, but it

shouldn't have become as dominant as it became.

MARSCHALL: *It introduced a whole lot of other fantasy characters.*

SCHULZ: The same with *Superman. Superman* was destroyed on several levels. In the first place, a comic strip cannot appear in its original form in too many areas because then, the tension goes out of it. You cannot have a daily strip going, a Sunday page going, *Action Comics* going, another *Superman* comic book going, a movie going. You can't have all these things going because he can't be damaged in one area and be undamaged in another. There are too many things going on at the same time. Now, *Superman* was great until he began to be able to see through things and fly. Superman shouldn't fly, Superman should jump. So they made a lot of mistakes.

MARSCHALL: *Before we leave the first period of your life, when you took the correspondence course, was it federal school then, or. . . .*

SCHULZ: Yes. It was the federal school. I was sitting at home at night and I used to draw on the dining room table. I had to push back the beautiful table cloth my mother had made, put newspaper down, and draw. I remember I fooled her one time. I brought a magic ink blot and pretended the ink bottle had fallen over and she came rushing in and I said "Mom, look." She screamed and ran out to get a dish towel. When she came back in, then I laughed—great sense of humor.

She came in one night and she said, "Look here in the newspaper. It says 'Do you like to draw?' Send for a free talent test." So I sent in and a few weeks later, a man knocked on the door and it was a man from the correspondence school. And he sold us the course.

MARSCHALL: *They went door to door?*

SCHULZ: Yeah.

MARSCHALL: *Did you ever finish the course?*

SCHULZ: Oh, sure.

MARSCHALL: *I don't think I've met a cartoonist who's had the Famous Artists course who actually finished one. They thought the world of them, but. . . .*

SCHULZ: I may be wrong, but the percentage of people that finish the course was very low, because it just takes a lot of drive to do this on your own at home. Now, this is a good course, and they were all good instructors, dedicated people. They were always sending out material to encourage you to do your work and all of that sort of thing. All my friends work there.

MARSCHALL: *And you worked there, eventually. . . .*

SCHULZ: After the war, yeah.

MARSCHALL: *Correcting the students?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. See, I was afraid to go to art school. I could not see myself sitting in a class with 30 other people who could draw circles around me. It just didn't interest me. So I didn't do anything after high school. I had a couple of jobs. And then, of course, the war came along, and that was the turning point for all of us. I remember visiting the service club one Sunday afternoon and seeing a show of originals of gag cartoons that had been in *Colliers* and the *New Yorker,* or wherever they were, looking at them, and admiring how beautifully drawn they were. And before that, when I was still a teenager, drawing some kind of adventure strip, my mother noticed in the paper that there was a show of originals in the downtown library. We went down there that afternoon, and I walked around the room and I saw Roy Crane drawing boats in the water, then went home and took all of my work and tore it up and threw it away and started over again.

I knew I had a long way to go. But I used to go over then to the correspondence school which was in Minneapolis—although I mailed in all of my lesson work—I didn't even have the nerve to take that over in person, although we were allowed to do it. But then later on, after I got my diploma and graduated, I used to take my comic strips over and I would show them to an older man named Frank Wing and he used to draw this thing called *Yesterday.* He was a great believer in literal drawing. He could draw beautifully and he tried to encourage people to draw from life—you know, if you have to draw a shoe, put a shoe down on the ground and learn how to draw a shoe. You can't draw a cartoon shoe until you learn how to draw a real shoe. And he would look at my work, but he couldn't really tell me what was wrong with it and I used to say "Well, look at *Popeye.* He doesn't draw real people." He never could explain to me why *Popeye* was good. And that always puzzled me.

MARSCHALL: *Did he really think it was?*

SCHULZ: Oh, yeah. He liked *Popeye,* but he couldn't tell me what marvelous quality was there. So, later on, after I got a job, he used to sit with me and we used to laugh and joke about things and talk about comic strips and stuff. But I learned a lot from Frank Wing.

MARSCHALL: *You sold gag cartoons to the* Saturday Evening Post *and, am I right, no other magazine?*

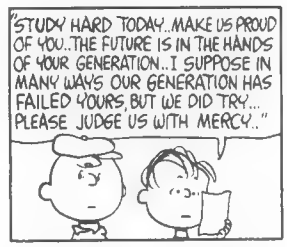
SCHULZ: No, nope.

MARSCHALL: *That's incredible. I mean, just starting out. . . .*

SCHULZ: The [other magazines] just didn't buy the things.

MARSCHALL: *Yeah, but if you're going to sell to some*

"DEAR SON, I WILL BE AWAY WHEN YOU GET HOME FROM SCHOOL TODAY.. I HAVE BEEN INVITED TO A BRIDGE PARTY... I WILL LEAVE A SANDWICH AND SOME MILK IN THE REFRIGERATOR..."


"STUDY HARD TODAY..MAKE US PROUD OF YOU..THE FUTURE IS IN THE HANDS OF YOUR GENERATION..I SUPPOSE IN MANY WAYS OUR GENERATION HAS FAILED YOURS, BUT WE DID TRY... PLEASE JUDGE US WITH MERCY.."

magazines, it's going to be This Week *or* American Legion *or something like that.* The Post *is the cream of the crop.*

SCHULZ: I did it all wrong. I drew this little cartoon of a boy sitting out on the ends of a chaise lounge, with his feet on the little stool. Then I finished it up and just sent it in all by itself.

MARSCHALL: *As a finish?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. I'd been sending things to other magazines. And I came home, I used to get mail from my dad's barber shop, when I lived in an apartment around the corner and upstairs. It said "Check Tuesday for spot drawing of boy on lounge." So, I put it away. My dad and I went out for dinner that night, as we usually did, and I said "I got a note today from the *Post*. Gee, now I understand that. They're going to send me a check on Tuesday. I thought it meant I should check the mail on Tuesday, they were going to send it back." And, sure enough, that Tuesday, I got a check for $40.00 and it was my first sale. My first major sale. I had been selling cartoons, *Li'l Folks*, to the *Pioneer* for two years and I had been doing lettering for the Catholic comic magazine *Timeless Topics* for several years.

MARSCHALL: *That was located. . . .*

SCHULZ: That was in St. Paul. I used to letter the whole comic magazine by myself: I would letter it in French and I would letter it in Spanish and it seems to me once I lettered the whole thing in Latin, sitting in my kitchen at night. I didn't know any of those languages, but they gave me the translations. I loved it.

MARSCHALL: *Did you do any other drawings for them, maybe fillers?*

SCHULZ: Once, I sold them two pages of little gag cartoons, four to a page, called *'Just Keep Laughing.'* He was going to run them regularly and then, after the second one, he said, "No. The priest that runs the place doesn't like it, so I have to tell you we don't need any more." And then, one day, I had done a special rush job for them. I went down after work, picked up these pages, went home, lettered the whole thing, and had it down there the next morning for him and as a show of gratitude, he let me do a four-page story and that was the only thing I ever got to do for him. You know, I saw him last year down in Santa Barbara and we reminisced about this.

MARSCHALL [*showing Schulz some old roughs from his collection*]: *After you made that initial sale to the* Post, *did you then start submitting roughs like these. . . .*

SCHULZ: Yeah. . .Where are those from?

MARSCHALL: *I think I got them from Jim Ivy.*

SCHULZ: Yeah, but where would he get them? You know, David Stanford sent me some Xerox copies of things like this several months ago. Where did it come from? Because if they are *Post* submissions, they should have been sent back to me. I mean, they were rejected.

MARSCHALL: *And if they'd been bought, they would have been sent back with notes on them or something.*

SCHULZ: No matter what. But they weren't bought. Isn't that weird? Better keep them. So, I sent in ten every week and over a period of two years, after a couple of years, I hit a terrible slump. You know, John Doly was kind enough to tear off little notes and clip them to each cartoon and tell me why he didn't buy it. I've never met the man, but I've been told that he was very kind that way and very considerate of cartoonists. And then I began to get on track and I made most of my sales using the gimmick of little kids using something the way it shouldn't be, like they were playing football on the bed and one of them said, "We're close enough. Let's try for a field goal," and the bed posts were the posts. And in another, they were going to have a race down this long davenport and the davenport was made to look like a race track. In another one, they were playing hockey on top of the birdbath. I've had Snoopy do that now for years. That was the kind of idea I sold.

MARSCHALL: *Props?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. And the first good line I thought up was one that was jotted down on the wall over there. Somebody permafaxed it for me. It was a girl standing in front of a desk talking to a guy and she says, "We're taking up a collection for one of the girls in the office who isn't getting married or leaving, but feels that she's stuck here for the rest of her life." I think that was my breakthrough of doing something that was reasonably literate. Anyway, I sold 15 over a period of two years, and then I sold *Peanuts*, and when I went to sign the contract, I said "Would it be all right to continue to submit ideas to the *Post*?" And he said, "No, I don't think you should, because an editor who buys your strip usually buys your name and your work and we think he should have exclusive use of your work." That was all right by me. I wanted to draw a strip. I couldn't stand that freelancing and that bitter blow of opening the envelope and seeing a note that said, "Sorry, nothing this week." It was so crushing.

MARSCHALL: *Well, it's got to be like baseball players, when a successful ball player fails two out of three times at the plate. No matter how much you sell to the magazines, most of the gags are rejected.*

SCHULZ: Right. And I never got into the real pro-

fessional pattern, which you have to do I think. You have to have a lot of markets and be very practical about it. I never got that far in it. I just sold the strip too quickly so I never became a real gag cartoonist.

MARSCHALL: Peanuts *really was the renaissance—do you agree with this?—of the intellectual strip. Growing up,* Peanuts *played a large role in my not being embarrassed about using big words in front of the other kids, and the Beethoven thing made me interested in Beethoven and Mozart. Do you agree with that definition of the strip? Did you have something like that in mind when you started the strip, or was this just a next generation* Skippy?

SCHULZ: I didn't have anything in mind. I was just drawing. [*Looking at promo brochure*] This came out later, though. See, Violet didn't come into the strip for at least a year and Shirley didn't come in for over a year. I never did figure out how to draw Shirley's hair. Why did they buy that? That looks terrible.

MARSCHALL: *But it's marketed here as a little kid's strip.*

SCHULZ: Yeah. Well, I've fought that all my life, too. And I fight it with licenses today. I don't draw for little kids. . . . Well, I draw for myself, which is who I think we all draw for. We draw for ourselves and hope that people like it. But the licenses keep driving it down for little kids. We did the first television show, *A Charlie Brown Christmas,* we did the best show we could do and what happens? We win an Emmy for the best children's animated show of the year. We didn't draw it for kids. We drew it for grown-ups. I just draw for myself and draw it as well as I can. I'm not pretending to be modest, I know I'm not an intellectual. I don't even think I'm very smart. I really don't. I think I'm witty and I think I know how to skim the surface of a subject and take out enough for me to use and to make it look like I know a lot about the subject. You really don't have to know much to be a cartoonist. So if it's an intellectual strip, I've never really even thought about it. I'm glad. I never thought about it, but I did want to draw something that was good.

MARSCHALL: *Comic strip history breaks down into the the pre-*Peanuts *era and the post-*Peanuts *era. It seems to me one of your main contributions is a technical construction of the strip. You started with a small cast of characters in the beginning, and then it got large. You drew them all with very, very strong personality traits, and then established a lot of premises and a lot of situations for them to fit into. So many strips before that were basically situational —"What are we going to do next?"—or humorous continuity. Since you established this type of strip—large cast, strong personalities as opposed to situations—virtually everything since that has come down the pike has been in that format.* Doonesbury, *certainly.*

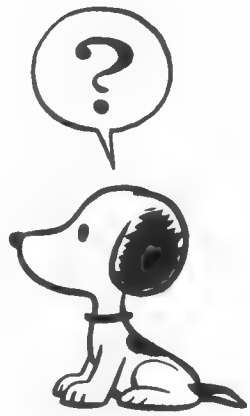
SCHULZ: Few people give me credit for having started this, but I think a lot of them don't realize that I did start it. I think, too, they used to say *Peanuts* has brought humor back into the comics page, because there is no doubt that, during the war, we had a lot of adventure things, and gag strips and humor strips had virtually disappeared. I think the great tragedy is now we have lost the continuity strip. We've lost, especially, the humorous continuity strip. They're all turning into gag strips, they're all saying what they think are meaningful statements—they're not meaningful at all, they're just dumb. And that's a tragedy, too. A lot of it is due to the shrinking of the size. Poor Al Capp would die if he had to draw at the size of these things these days. Now, we have this terrible trend, which has just suddenly burst upon us, of the one-panel comic strip. I don't know where that's going to lead.

MARSCHALL: *It's cheating.*

SCHULZ: And boring. Not only that, but it's robbing a creator of a chance to develop a group of characters and some good situations. Now, I like what you said before, the way you expressed that about from the characters, we went to certain situations, and I think this is the key to the whole thing. I created Beethoven's birthday, I created Linus and his blanket, I created the pursuit of the Red Baron, I created the pulling of the football, I created the Great Pumpkin—all of these, these are the things that make up a comic strip. You can't sit down and say, "I think I'm gonna draw a comic strip and this will be my main character." The main character has nothing to do with it. What you really need are the situations and that's where you should start. Nobody wants to start with that. They want to start by thinking up a character which will be a good gimmick and will make good plush toys. That's the wrong direction.

MARSCHALL: *More strips today start out based on animated TV shows. Seventeenth on the list is, "Oh, yeah, let's do a comic strip to base this thing on." It's not based on it.*

SCHULZ: It's interesting, too, you mention animation. Animation doesn't make good comic strips. Animated characters are drawn to revolve. They're drawn with a slick brush line and the eyes and nose and ears, everything placed in a rubbery way, so that the character can revolve and do certain things. That kind of drawing does not fit in the comic strip page. The comic strip page has drawing which is a scratchy pen technique. Usually, in some of the great old strips, the characters are only



I THINK A PERSON WHO NEVER SUFFERS, NEVER MATURES...SUFFERING IS ACTUALLY VERY IMPORTANT..
WHO WANTS TO SUFFER? DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!
BUT PAIN IS A PART OF LIFE, AND..
A PERSON WHO SPEAKS ONLY OF THE "PATIENCE" OF JOB REVEALS THAT HE KNOWS VERY LITTLE OF THE BOOK! NOW, THE WAY I SEE IT...

drawn from a couple of different views. *Popeye* was usually drawn from the left three quarters or the right three quarters. When you turn him into an animated character, he has to become rubber and it doesn't work. Bill Melendez and his animators had a terrible time with the *Peanuts* characters. Fortunately, we're in semi-animation, and it works. I told him "This is just a cartoon. Don't worry about making it so lifelike. They don't have to turn if you don't want them to, just have them flip from one spot to another. That's all right. It's still a cartoon. We're not trying to do *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*."

MARSCHALL: *You once said in the development of character, "I don't think the cartoonist can show a character. He's got to expose a character, maybe, through situations and explain it as you show it." When Snoopy started thinking, that told more about him and the things you had him do. Did that just evolve, too? Snoopy didn't think at first.*

SCHULZ: No, he didn't think. He actually barked and ran around on all fours and was just kind of a cute little puppy and I don't know how he got to walking and I don't know how he first began to think, but that was probably one of the best things that I ever did.

MARSCHALL: *Linus and the blanket? Was that just. . . .*

SCHULZ: My own kids all had blankets, so that was something I observed. And I said many times that I was glad I did because I know if I hadn't done it Mort Walker would have come in with it a few months later for sure. Since then, I've seen other comic strips with blankets, and they've used the same ideas I had already drawn. In fact, lately, I'm beginning to see ideas in comic strips which I drew 20 years ago, which makes me happy to know I beat these guys. But I remember being beaten by J.R. Williams by 30 years. And I was beaten by Gus Arriola by 10 or 15 years, so that happens. But I do see people using ideas which I've done a long time. Well, it's just a pattern of thinking; I don't say that it's stealing. I know it's not stealing, it's just a pattern of thinking.

MARSCHALL: *The sincerest kind of flattery.*

SCHULZ: Yeah.

MARSCHALL: *Okay, we mentioned Snoopy and the blanket. Charlie Brown evolved. He was almost like a wise guy, at the beginning?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. Little by little the characters begin to fall into place. I think there is a similarity to the lead characters in a lot of scripts. There is one simple character who is kind of innocent. He's not too strong in his personality; if he were, then he would dominate the strip. He's the one that holds everything together, and it's the other characters who have the unique personalities. He can't be a terrible character, but he has to be somebody that you like that holds things together. And that's what Charlie Brown is there for. Although, sometimes I think I should use him more—but I've got so many characters now that it's difficult to know who I should use the most. For a while, I received a couple of letters from somebody that said, "Don't use the dog so much. Get back to the little kids." I never pay attention to letters like that. But maybe he was right, maybe I was using Snoopy too much. I'm always trying to be selective. I'm always trying to do different things. And I always wanted to have some girls in the strip, which is why I have drifted more toward Peppermint Patty and Marcie.

There is something else here which is worth mentioning, I think, which again it's important towards building personalities and characters, in that Peppermint Patty calls Charlie Brown "Chuck." She's the only one in the strip that does that, where Marcie calls him "Charles." Everybody else calls him "Charlie Brown." Those are the little things. If you have enough of those little things, then I think you take on some kind of depth. I'm not a believer in funny names. I think a funny name is fine for one gag or one idea, but I don't think people are going to laugh at that funny name

every day. You can't count on that. That's why my strip doesn't have many funny things like that in it, where you're trying for that extra laugh all the time.

MARSCHALL: *In that vein, were you planning for the* April Fool *to take off like the* Great Pumpkin *did?*

SCHULZ: No. That was just a one-time strip. I didn't even like the way I drew it. I like the Easter Beagle. For a long while, I wouldn't do anything on Easter. I'm very sensitive to not offending anybody and I thought I shouldn't do anything with Easter. But then I thought, "Oh, the heck with it. It's fun—"the Easter Beagle," so I did it anyway.

MARSCHALL: *My next question was going to be about Robert Short's two books. Do you think he went too far in analyzing the strip?*

SCHULZ: Well, I don't know if he really analyzed. I think what he was really trying to do was use a comic strip as a springboard toward some kind of spiritual ideas. Robert's a great guy. We didn't even know each other when he wrote the book. I think the book had been out for a year before we finally met, but since then, we've become close friends and we love being together and talking about different things. I think he likes to just draw little spiritual thoughts from everything that goes on in his life and it occurred to me *Peanuts* was providing some spiritual jumping off place. Now I know it didn't come off that way, but I know that's what he was intending. The book was never mine and it was never meant to be my idea. That was part of the original agreement that, sure, he can use the strips, but it's not my writing.

MARSCHALL: *It's his interpretation. You just talked about readers being offended—you've probably gotten complaints when you've used Scripture, which you have more than any other artist.*

SCHULZ: I think I've done more authentic scriptural strips than anybody. I hate cheap spiritual innuendo. I hate strips showing the kid praying, talking about what mean things he did in the daytime. I just despise that kind of thing. I'd like to think that mine was done on a better level than that. I'm a reasonable student of the Scriptures, a typical Midwestern scholar. I think I use the Scripture very well in the strip in ways nobody else has ever thought of doing it, or would have the nerve, or even has the scholarship to do it. I'm proud of that, and also very sensitive to it. I've always done it in a nice way, never offensive. I was amazed when we put out the book called *The Beagles and the Bunnies* that we had enough to fill out the whole book. I never dreamed of that.

MARSCHALL: *You're a committed Christian?*

SCHULZ: I think I'm becoming a secular humanist [*laughter*], but I don't want to get into that.

MARSCHALL: *I've heard that term applied to you. Did I read once that you were a lay preacher?*

SCHULZ: Oh, well, I was very active in the church group right after World War II. We were all in our twenties and we went to Sunday morning services. We went to Sunday evening youth meetings—although we weren't really youths—we went to Sunday evening services and Wednesday night prayer meetings and we were all very dedicated to the church. And now and then, I might be asked to speak on a Sunday evening. I have even spoken out on street corners, which I never should have done. I would never do it again because I no longer feel I'm in a position to tell anybody anything, so I don't do it. But, anyway, I did all those things and it was a good group; they were nice people. I still have contact with a few of them and I'm in contact with the minister, who is now retired. We studied the Scriptures and discussed them avidly. That's where my background for all of those biblical things comes from and I have an honorary doctorate from Anderson College, which is the Church of God college.

MARSCHALL: *When you go from your knowledge, or maybe you turn to* Proverbs *or some of those parables, you don't do it in a subversive way to get a point across.*

SCHULZ: I'm never grinding an axe, I'm never doing it to teach anybody anything. Very seldom. Maybe if we looked through them I could point out a few where I might be trying to say something against hypocrisy, I really don't know. It's hard to say overall. It's just that certain phrases pop into my mind and I think that would be funny, so I look up the Scriptures or else I remember a Scripture and suddenly, I find something comes into my mind, a certain way of using it, that's all.

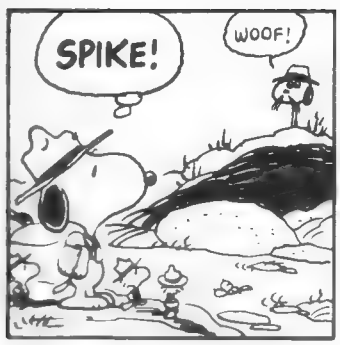
GROTH: *You said something earlier that I thought was potentially fascinating, that you were becoming a secular humanist?*

SCHULZ: Well, I don't go to church any more. I taught adult Sunday school class in Minneapolis and came out here to a local Methodist church, but I never became a Methodist. They were just a nice group of people and they were all quite educated. I enjoyed the class and I did it for about ten years. Finally, I just ran out of things to say and it became an effort to do all the studying. Besides, this business of always having to think of something gets to you after a while. It got so that I could never be invited to a banquet without having to get up and say a few words. I have to think up a daily strip and I have to think up a Sunday and I was drawing youth cartoons for *Church* magazine and trying to think of a Sunday school lesson and studying and oh, gosh . . . Finally, after a while I just had to say, let somebody else do it, because I just don't have any more to say. So I haven't been back to church.

GROTH: *Is there a sense that you're questing for. . . .*

SCHULZ: [*laughter*] No, I'm not questing for anything. I don't know anything, frankly. I think it's all a total mystery. I have no idea why we're here and I have no idea what happens after you die. My class wasn't one so much of teaching as it was just getting people to say things. I know I led them through the Bible verse by verse four times and each time, I would learn something more. I was not at all anxious to teach them what I thought about . . . . Every now and then, someone would say, "Well, what do you think?" and I would say "It doesn't matter what I think. I just want to hear what you think and get you to talk about these

CHARLIE BROWN, I HAVE A FRIEND HERE WHO WANTS TO MEET YOU... SHE LOVES BASEBALL, AND WANTS TO PLAY ON YOUR TEAM ... HER NAME IS "PEPPERMINT" PATTY...



things and actually read the Scriptures instead of saying, Well, I've heard about that in this or that."

MARSCHALL: *An awful lot of people haven't.*

SCHULZ: Oh, I know, I know. I don't even know what secular humanism is. Have you ever heard of the book, I'm sure you have, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*? I know the author very well. She asked me what I believed. I said what I thought I believed in, and she said, "You are a secular humanist, that's what you are," and I said, "I am?" and she said, "Yeah, that's what I think you are." [*laughter*] But she's a marvelous lady.

GROTH: *Was there ever a time when you questioned your religion?*

SCHULZ: Well, it's not a matter of questioning. . . . My religious thing all started, it must have been a matter of gratitude. I was brought up Lutheran, but my dad liked to go fishing on Sundays, so we almost never went to church. I was never really brought up in church. But my mother was extremely ill with cancer when I was just turning 20. She was just coming out of the hospital. She suffered terribly. I used to wake up at night and hear her down the hall crying in pain. It was a terrible time. I got drafted as soon as I turned 20 and I had to report. I got to go home a couple of weekends as they were deciding what ought to be done and one Sunday night I was home, she was so ill. I was saying good night to her to her back and she said, "Well, goodbye, Sparky. We'll probably never see each other again." It has to be one of the most heart-breaking things in my life. It's bad enough to get drafted, but to know that your mom will die. She was only 48. And sure enough, she died the next day. Then I came home from the funeral and the next thing I knew, I'm back with the army on a troop train and I'm traveling through the night with a bunch of guys I've never seen before in my life without knowing where I'm going. And I started going to church just out of a feeling of gratitude that I survived all of that. I felt that God protected me and helped me and gave me the strength to survive because I could have gone off in all sorts of wrong directions. I always felt that I was helped to live through those three years and come home because I never got shot or anything.

I knew about this Church of God—my dad and I used to go now and then—but one night, it was a Wednesday night, I was feeling very lonely and I knew they needed a new sign out in front of the church. It was a very poor church, so I walked all the way down several miles through the snow to the church. I told the minister I would make him a new sign if he wanted me to. He was a great man. I made a lot of friends there. That's how it all happened. And then we came out here and my first wife didn't care much about getting involved in the church once we got out here, so we sort of drifted away from it. But now I've ended up with one daughter becoming a Mormon and going to England as a Mormon missionary [*laughter*]. We've become very close because of it, even though I don't like Mormons. I think that it's drawn us close together, we can talk about the scriptural things that she was never interested in before and she has a fine husband. My family has gone in all different directions, but they're all good kids.

MARSCHALL: *Do you want to tell us your kids' names?*

SCHULZ: Well, Meredith is the oldest. She lives in Colorado and raises mules.

MARSCHALL: *Raises mules?*

SCHULZ: [*laughter*] Yeah. Monty is the next. Monty lives in Santa Barbara. He's just finishing his novel. Craig is a pilot, and Jill is a professional skater with the Ice Follies, *Holiday On Ice*, and she's starring in my new venture, a new movie called *The Girl in the Red Truck*. It's an idea I got one day where Spike sees somebody drive by in a red truck and he waves to this girl and the girl waves back and he says, "Wow, that was great." So he waits for her to come back and I thought to myself as I was drawing these strips, "This is too big for a comic strip. A comic strip really can't carry a story like this. It would make a good television show." Then I thought, "Gee, it would make a great movie." [*laughter*] Finally, after fiddling around with it for, oh, almost two years, I settled for an hour television movie, 47 minutes, and I'm paying for the whole thing myself. We went down to Arizona last November and filmed the whole thing with Spike and Jill meeting on the desert and his happiness is destroyed because she has a boyfriend [*laughter*]. Of course, Jill is a great skater, so we have a great roller-skating sequence where Jill and Spike skate together. Now Bill Melendez is adding Spike to the film. It's live action and animation.

MARSCHALL: *It'll have a typical* Peanuts *ending?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. [*laughter*]

MARSCHALL: *None of the other characters will be in it?*

SCHULZ: Only at the very beginning, where we had to solve the problem of explaining what's going on at the time, because Spike can't talk, and I refuse to give him a voice—so Charlie Brown is reading Snoopy a letter he got from Spike. Spike says, "Life in the desert is good. I go for walks and things and the other day, the most wonderful thing happened that has ever happened in my whole life—" So we have a voiceover, if we need it.

MARSCHALL: *When will this air?*

SCHULZ: Probably after the first of the year because we have too many other things. We've got eight shows this year. We're doing a show on the Constitution, where the characters are back in 1787 when the Constitution is being formulated and the characters. . . . The kids are all working around the building.

MARSCHALL: *Will they be in costume?*

SCHULZ: Yeah.

MARSCHALL: *Do you consider that educational?*

SCHULZ: Well, I hate to. That's another thing. It's like being dragged down to little tiny kids. Everybody wants me to make what you do, if it's a success, make it educational.

MARSCHALL: *We talked about continuity. It seems to me that one thing that could revive the newspaper comic strip, the humor strip, would be the return*

of humor continuities. And you use them. How do you plan them? Do you know the ending before you start, or do you just let it run and surprise yourself when it comes to an end?

SCHULZ: I never have any idea where I'm going with it and I discovered something, which is why I don't think—and I suppose I'll always offend somebody someplace—I don't think you can write a comic strip on a typewriter. I think you're robbing yourself of the ideas that come from drawing, so what I'm more interested in is a good, standard, day-to-day group of ideas, which is more important than where the story goes. I'm doing a story right now and I have no idea where I'm going with it, but I'm very interested in trying to make each day funny. If you think of an overall story, you're liable to end up with a weak strip on Tuesday and Friday or Saturday and I don't want to do that. I'm more interested in making each day as funny as I can. I don't know, maybe I've had some stories run five weeks, five or six at the longest. I haven't had any lately. They're awfully hard work and you have to have time to think about them. But I do agree that some kind of stories and strips can bring the reader back so he doesn't want to miss the next day's strip. It's very important in building circulation.

MARSCHALL: *You've got characters with neuroses—Charlie Brown with his inferiority complex and Linus being insecure and Lucy kvetching and all that. Does anyone advance the observation that you have done sort of Yiddish humor in WASP clothes?*

SCHULZ: Not really. I have become a fairly good friend, through the mail, of Leo Rosten. He sends me all of his books, and I think *I'm the Captain* is one of the greatest humor books ever written. Otherwise, I don't know much about it.

There is one thing I do resent. I resent the fact that when we talk about America's great humorists, comic strip artists are never mentioned, not even the great people that draw for the *New Yorker*. Where's George Price?

MARSCHALL: *A couple of characters—Frieda and Faron. Are you a fan of country music?*

SCHULZ: I was. I'm not a fan of any music any more. It's very personal, but when Joyce and I were separated and divorced, and I was living alone and I was very unhappy, and I was separated from my children for a few months there, I couldn't stand to listen to the radio or any music. So I stopped listening to music and I really have not gotten back into it. I used to love country and western music. The whole business of Charlie Brown and the red-haired girl came from listening to a Hank Williams song. I was home alone one night listening to it and it was so depressing that it occurred to me that I would do something with Charlie Brown and the little red-haired girl and that's how it all started. [*laughter*]

MARSCHALL: *You'll never show her, right?*

SCHULZ: No, and I think it was a mistake to even show her on television, but you make a lot of mistakes when you do a lot of media. But I could never draw her into the strip now. You reach a point where the reader has already drawn her. And you could never live up to the way the reader has drawn her in his or her imagination.

MARSCHALL: *Was that a temptation because of the animated format, or. . . .*

SCHULZ: I'm not good at drawing pretty little faces. That would be the number one fear. I could probably be tempted into drawing her, if I could draw a real knock-out of a cute little girl, but I don't think I could. So I don't think I will. I like the little face on the girl that keeps telling Linus, "Aren't you kind of old for me?" Even that face was a struggle to draw.

MARSCHALL: *You named Woodstock during the Woodstock era. Were you speaking of your readership, or did you just hear the name and think it was neat?*

SCHULZ: I had been reading the *Life* magazine article about the Woodstock festival and I had the little bird in the strip. It was a she and she was Snoopy's secretary and I was doing secretary jokes quite often so then I thought Woodstock would be a good name for this bird and also, it will get the attention of these people that liked that kind of thing. Suddenly, she was not a secretary, she became Woodstock, the boy. [*laughter*] It just happened. But that's what's good about a comic strip—you can just do it.

MARSCHALL: *Have licensing and merchandising or reader reaction ever influenced you to do things with characters and storylines?*

SCHULZ: No. There are a lot of temptations and that would be easy to do, but I've never drawn anything with the thought that it would be good for licensing. I've never even emphasized a certain character because I thought it would be important. Right now, it's very tempting because we're working on this movie starring Spike and it's very tempting to push Spike in the strip just to give him more attention, so that people will be ready for him. I don't think I could do it if I wanted to because I can't think of that many ideas for him. But I like drawing Spike in the desert and I love

I CAN'T TALK TO THAT LITTLE RED-HAIRED GIRL BECAUSE SHE'S SOMETHING AND I'M NOTHING
IF I WERE SOMETHING AND SHE WERE NOTHING, I COULD TALK TO HER, OR IF SHE WERE SOMETHING AND I WERE SOMETHING, THEN I COULD TALK TO HER...
OR IF SHE WERE NOTHING AND I WERE NOTHING, THEN I ALSO COULD TALK TO HER...BUT SHE'S SOMETHING AND I'M NOTHING SO I CAN'T TALK TO HER...
FOR A NOTHING, CHARLIE BROWN, YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING!
SCHULZ

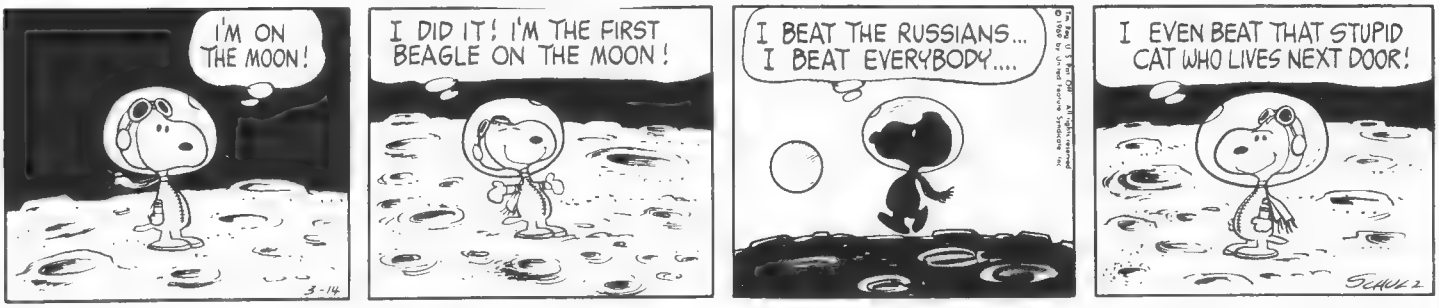
drawing those rocks and the cactuses. [*laughter*]

GROTH: *Do you impose a substantial amount of authority over how your work is licensed?*

SCHULZ: Well, I have control over everything. My contract gives control. They can't do anything without my okay and I can do anything I want, as long as it does not destroy the property.

GROTH: *Are there certain ways that you would not want your property licensed, that you would veto?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. They're always dropping it down to make it too childlike and I don't like that. But I just can't get around it. Now they're coming out with the *Snoopy* quarterly magazine, which will be for very small children. But they promised it would be good quality. They're the same ones that put out *Muppets* magazine. It's a good outfit, I guess. They came out and visited us last week. Well, what do I care. [*laughter*]


I'M ON THE MOON!
I DID IT! I'M THE FIRST BEAGLE ON THE MOON!
I BEAT THE RUSSIANS... I BEAT EVERYBODY....
I EVEN BEAT THAT STUPID CAT WHO LIVES NEXT DOOR!

GROTH: *Do you ever feel like you're losing control?*

SCHULZ: No. But I'm getting old. I'll be 65 in November. And I wonder what is happening to me? Someday, you're going to be old. [*laughter*]

MARSCHALL: *Does that mean you're thinking of withdrawing to the strip and letting other people pay attention to the merchandising? That doesn't show in the strip. I mean, you have introduced new characters.*

SCHULZ: Oh, no. No, the only reason that licensing keeps getting bigger is the fact that it's simply more popular now. United Features, which never even had a licensing department before, suddenly had this enormous licensing property and we had people devoted exclusively just to looking at other companies and finding licensed properties and things, which we never did. Everything we ever did came to us, really. We never went out and sought anything. So now licensing is very big, but I'm involved with it only to the point where I want to see it done as decently as possible.

MARSCHALL: *Would you go through the story of how* A Charlie Brown Christmas *happened?*

SCHULZ: Well, we'd have to go back to the animated Ford commercials. J. Walter Thompson got the idea that they wanted to use the *Peanuts* characters to advertise Ford products and, immediately, they went to the Falcon. The Falcon was the car that was just starting then. So we did animated commercials, newspaper ads, billboards, everything, and I drew them all too. And I used to help them write the newspaper ads and the animated commercials and that's how I met Bill Melendez.

He learned how to draw the characters and so, when Lee Mendelson called me one day, he was doing a series on Bay area personalities, an hour television special. He had just finished one on Willie Mays which I had just seen and I thought it was great, so I said sure, come on out. Let's talk about it. So, he started filming the hour documentary and he wanted me to include some television stuff, some animated stuff, so I said, "Well, then, you have to meet Bill, then, because he's going to be the one to do it." So they formed their little organization and they started on this documentary and then they couldn't sell it. The way the story goes, a man from Coke who used to buy air time, called Lee and said, "We're looking for something for Christmas. You wouldn't happen to have a Christmas show, do you?" He said, "Well, we might." He called me and I said, "Well, sure, we can write one." So, me and Bill came up and we sat in my room and we wrote the Christmas show. We did the whole thing in four months and it won an Emmy and suddenly we were in the television business.

MARSCHALL: *Were they interested because of the popularity of* Peanuts*?*

SCHULZ: Yes. They were pretty popular by then.

MARSCHALL: *Did Coke see a sample, or the boards?*

SCHULZ: They must have seen the boards. I don't know really know. *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* came about because this young man wanted to write some songs about the *Peanuts* characters—Clark Gesner—and put them in an album. And so the business manager asked me if it would be all right, and I told him yes and he sent me the test record and it sounded wonderful. I remember saying at the time, "This would make a good Broadway show, these are great songs." He had a little trouble selling it at first, but finally, MGM Records recorded it with Orson Bean as Charlie Brown. The girl that played Lucy took it over to her friend, Arthur Whitelaw, and said, "I just made this album and I think it would make a good show" and Arthur heard the songs and said, "Yeah, it's good" and so he asked the syndicate if they could put together some more things and make it into a show and that's how *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* came about. I never saw the thing for a couple of years. I never went to New York.

MARSCHALL: *Well, I know you weren't there opening night.*

SCHULZ: You were there?

MARSCHALL: *I saw it as a kid when I was palling around with members of the NCS.*

SCHULZ: That, to me, has been the most gratifying thing out of all the things that have happened. It's become the most performed musical in the history of American theatre.

MARSCHALL: *Is that right?*

SCHULZ: Yes, because every school and church and high school and grade school and kindergarten you can think of has put this thing on and it had taken a terrible beating but it survives. And, of course, the music is good and it's not cute. That was the main thing. It was incredible that they could have made so many mistakes putting it together, but everything just fell right into place just right and that's very gratifying. I used to go down to the theatre in San Francisco and it was a great pleasure to stand out in the lobby when the show was over and seeing the families coming out and everybody smiling because they had had a good time [*laughter*].

MARSCHALL: *And it was just you, no chorus girls or anything like that.*

SCHULZ: No, no. That was the only thing I told them when it first started. I said "Don't try to make it. . . Don't do anything to it. Don't try to make it sophisticated. Don't try to do something to it to make it appeal to New York audiences." I said just play it straight, and that's what they did.

Something that almost nobody knows is that before that Kaye Ballard made an album that included some of the songs, but CBS ruined it by putting in a lot of strange sounds and things like that. But Kaye Ballard wrote me once and she said "I'm using some of your things in my act" and I had heard Kaye Ballard, but I had never seen her perform. I read in the paper that she was performing at Hungry I. I called up and found out where she was staying and she was so pleased that I called her and I was so pleased to talk with her and she said "You gotta come down and see my act. I'm using some of your things in my act and I want you to come down and see it. You come down and be my guest at dinner and see the show." So we did and she put on a marvelous show and she could sing so well. But every now and again in her act, she would turn to her pianist. She used to say "Arthur is now going to play a medley of these hits." She'd lean on the piano and she'd say Charlie Brown and then she'd go through her little Charlie Brown-Lucy thing and she hadn't asked for permission, she was just doing these things.

MARSCHALL: *From the script?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. And then we talked about it and she said "I'd really like to do an album of all these things. You really should, they're so funny." So she did, but the album never sold more than four copies, I think.

MARSCHALL: *How did Vince Guaraldi get involved? I thought that was so inspired.*

SCHULZ: Lee and I were just talking about that yesterday because we have a show and we had to have some music and Lee didn't know what to do and I guess he had heard Vince or something. He was playing in the Bay area and he just asked him to do the songs. And now, "Linus and Lucy" has become a minor classic.

WHAT ARE YOU WATCHING?
THE "ROSE PARADE" FROM PASADENA
THEY HAVE SOME OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FLOATS THIS YEAR I'VE EVER SEEN
HAS THE GRAND MARSHAL GONE BY YET?
YEAH, YOU MISSED HIM...
BUT HE WASN'T ANYONE YOU EVER HEARD OF!
SCHULZ

MARSCHALL: *A Boy Named Charlie Brown. . . .*

SCHULZ: Oh, the first movie. We were victims of making the movie too long. I think it did have a few good parts and it was very successful, but it was just too long and it stretched out. I don't know quite how to handle it. I don't think any of the movies hold up except *Snoopy, Come Home*—that I think is going to last for a long time. It has a lot of funny things in it. That's a difficult medium. There are so many other people involved. My problem is just trying to draw the daily strip and then the Sunday page and just keep track of these things. Sometimes I wish I were like Walt Disney and have my own big studio and be there every day and listen to the musicians and watch what's being done and have story conferences and just do it all the time. But I have to sit and draw this strip every day. You can't do everything. And yet, the animators do some things.

MARSCHALL: *Have you gotten into any animation, the techniques and such, or do you just do the storyboards?*

SCHULZ: I've never even learned how to animate.

MARSCHALL: *Do you want to mention Determine Productions?*

SCHULZ: Well, Determine Productions came about when Connie Boucher called me and she wanted to put out a date book, and I thought it was a good idea. They sold out the first batch of their date books, so the next year, they doubled them and sold them out again and they talked about what else they could do. So, in passing, she mentioned could we do a book of some kind? And I said Yeah. I'd always wanted to do an original book rather than just the reprints, and so she was looking through some scripts and saw the one that ended with "Happiness is a Warm Puppy" and she said this would be a good book. And I said, "Yeah, but I can't

think of any more ideas" and she said, "Why don't you try?" So she went to San Francisco and the next day I sat down and I wrote the whole book in about an hour. I drew it up and it was a number one best-seller of 1963. And that got Connie Boucher going. [*laughter*] From then on, there was no stopping her.

MARSCHALL: *For a while, I think, she handled* Peanuts *material?*

SCHULZ: Everybody, Rick, starts off with me and gets going, then tries to leave me, tries to go out and do something else and then always comes back to me. [*laughter*]

MARSCHALL: *Snoopy going to the moon. Did they come to you for permission, or. . . .*

SCHULZ: A man named—I'm amazed I can remember all these things—a wonderful man named Al Chop came to me and they had just had that tragic fire where the astronauts were killed and so they wanted to start a new safety program and he had an idea to build the program around a cartoon character and he asked me if Snoopy could be the character and I said, "Sure, I'm very flattered." So they made posters and all sorts of things. They made beautiful little metal things which were really nice pieces of jewelry and if a person on the assembly line has a good safety record, one of the astronauts would present him or her with the pin and of course, those pins were taken to the moon and the moon landing. So Snoopy, literally, is the first character to go to the moon. That of course always pleases me. There are a lot of things that have happened that please me to no end.

MARSCHALL: *Other things being the Rose Bowl where you were named the Grand Marshal?*

SCHULZ: Yeah. I never dreamed I would be Grand Marshal of the Rose Bowl Parade. It was fun. Some things end, though, before you know you're having fun. Before you know it, the parade is over. [*laughter*] That was great. And I've made so many good friends in all of these things. The man who was the president of the Rose Parade that year, Eddie Wilson, he and I became close friends. We still correspond, and all of these things are very gratifying to me.

MARSCHALL: *I would like to ask you about* Peanuts Prelude. *That's your most recent book, right?*

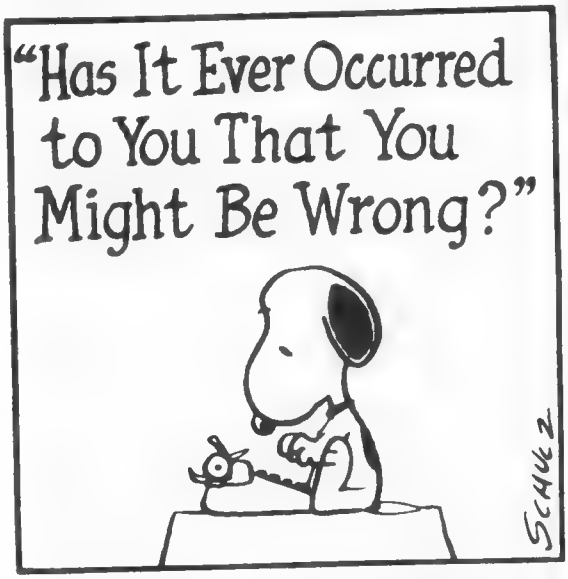
SCHULZ: I think it was either that or *You Don't Look 35, Charlie Brown.* I don't know which came out first.

MARSCHALL: *But you are moving on to a new publisher?*

SCHULZ: They just didn't print enough books and distribute them. You know, *The Peanuts Trivia* books, they printed 10,000 of them. I said "You can sell 10,000 of them in New York City alone." That's ridiculous. There must be 10,000 book stores in the country and if they each sold one, that's all you need. I don't understand it. They were never able to give us a reason why they didn't print more of the books and get them into the stores. You could go into B. Dalton's, Walden's, and you'd see *Garfield* by the millions, and you would see no *Peanuts* books. Now, I have sold over 300,000,000 books in my life. Why can't I have them in these stores? So that's why. And it wasn't my decision. It was a decision on the part of the syndicate.

MARSCHALL: *Can you tell us about the new publisher?*

SCHULZ: It's United Features, an imprint called Pharaoh Books. A fellow by the name of David Hendin, who's the vice-president in charge of these things and they promised me they were really going to get these things out.



GROTH: *Why do you think they weren't printing enough books? Pure incompetence?*

SCHULZ: I wish I knew, it's a mystery. We've never been able to solve it. We'd keep asking and asking but we've never been able to solve it. I've had books on the best-seller list and it used to be that just automatically we'd sell 100,000 of these things, but all of a sudden, they're not there any more. I could never figure that out. I would rather them not print them at all than just print a few.

GROTH: *Do you think there is a greater concern for commercial consideration now than there was, say, twenty years ago?*

I CAN'T GO THROUGH WITH IT!!
I HAVE TO GET CHRISTMAS PRESENTS! I WANT ALL I CAN GET, AND I WANT IT NOW BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
I WANT ALL I CAN GET BEFORE I'M TOO OLD, AND EVERYTHING IS GONE, AND THE SUN HAS DIMMED, AND THE STARS HAVE FALLEN, AND THE BIRDS ARE SILENT AND THE WHEAT IS EATEN...
"THE WHEAT IS EATEN"?

SCHULZ: I don't know. I really don't. I know that people in United Features deny it. But it's hard to think that they're not. We tried doing Saturday morning, but we couldn't keep up, it was just too much. Bill couldn't handle it all.

MARSCHALL: *Did you work on them, too, story ideas and such?*

SCHULZ: Well, they took all of them from the strips, so I didn't have to. That was just too much. Too much to draw.

GROTH: *I have a couple more questions I would like to ask you. One thing I am curious about is if you are a politically oriented person.*

SCHULZ: No. I was brought up Republican. I saw Herbert Hoover get off the train in St. Paul when he was running for re-election. And I saw Eisenhower once when we went to Minneapolis and we all stood out on the street . . . but I was very taken by Wendel Wilkie when I was young. I was calling myself an Eisenhower Republican, because he was the first person I ever voted for that got elected [*laughter*]. Gosh, you know, for 20 years we were under Democratic rule. Twenty solid years and then . . . But I sold a cartoon because of Dewey losing that morning. When I came back to Art Instruction that morning, of course Truman had won and some woman came in who had voted for Wallace. She still was glad Dewey had lost. Somebody said, "How did you sleep last night?" I said, "Oh, I sleep well enough at night, it's living during the day I find so hard" and I sold it to the *Saturday Evening Post*. So I figure I got $80.00 out of the election anyway. But I've never been involved in local politics or done anything. I've met President Carter and President Reagan. He called me on the phone when I was recovering from surgery, which was quite flattering.

GROTH: *Do you have any loosely defined political leanings?*

SCHULZ: No, no, I don't even want to get into that. It's the same as the religious thing. I'm not especially fond of of all political cartooning. I think a lot of it is irresponsible. These guys write about things they really don't know anything about. They leap on the band wagon the day after something happens and draw things that aren't even true. And some of them are terribly petty on both sides. I've had troubles with them in times past with them using my characters. Only one time in maybe 30 some guy drawing for one of the Chicago papers was using my characters for something the exact opposite of what I believed in. It reminded me of Bill Mauldin and his suit against the *Los Angeles Times*. . . .

MARSCHALL: *Conrad?*

SCHULZ: Conrad. Yeah, because he used Willie and Joe in a cartoon in a way that offended Mauldin, without asking him.

GROTH: *One of the remarkable things about the strip is that there is no perceivable ideologies.*

SCHULZ: [*laughter*] Sort of a wishy-washyness.

GROTH: *No, no, not at all. It's really remarkable, because there are so many shrill ideologies.*

SCHULZ: Well, I do think about it. I really don't want to offend people and I don't think it's necessary. I think it can be funny and remain kind of innocent and yet I don't think you have to be sugary sweet or stupid.

GROTH: *This is a sort of cliched question, but I'll ask it anyway. Can you tell us what you think the future or potential of comics is?*

SCHULZ: Depends on the editors. I don't think we have any choice. I think we're totally at the mercy of the editors and whatever they're going to do with these comic pages. And if it keeps up the way it's going now. . . I think there are good futures for a lot of people. I know they're buying all sorts of new things and all that. I don't think it's necessarily going to produce great new superstars. And I'm not just talking about just making a lot of money, I'm talking about somebody really great. Obviously, *Calvin and Hobbes* is one that seems to have the opportunity to do something really great and I don't know if it will or not. It's difficult because of the space you have.

GROTH: *Do you think that the new formats coming out, such as book-length comic books, will have some. . .*

SCHULZ: I don't think comic books have anything to do with it, do you? . . .Oh, do you mean the reprints of comic strips?

GROTH: *No, I'm talking about the new formats that are being published.*

SCHULZ: I haven't seen them.

GROTH: *Have you heard of Art Spiegelman's* Maus*?*

SCHULZ: Oh, sure, sure.

GROTH: *Okay. That's the sort of thing I'm talking about. Because you get away from the space restrictions and the editors.*

SCHULZ: Yeah, yeah. But I suppose, again, that they're at the mercy of the publishers and the distributors and it's a whole different profession. It's something which is totally foreign to me. What I think is a pity is something like that can't be transferred to the comics page. The newspapers won't even listen to this, but the potential is there and I think there's a lot of great children's book illustrators who should be in the comic pages, but are not.

GROTH: *Have you resisted the temptation to take a vacation?*

THE GREAT PUMPKIN RISES OUT OF THE PUMPKIN PATCH, AND FLIES THROUGH THE AIR AND BRINGS TOYS TO ALL THE CHILDREN IN THE WORLD!

SCHULZ: Quit for a year? So far I've resisted it.

GROTH: *But you've had the temptation?*

SCHULZ: I never thought I would, but the last few years, all my friends are retiring and I'm beginning to wonder if I hadn't wasted my life. Yeah, wait 'til you're 65 or 64.

MARSCHALL: *You mean that literally?*

SCHULZ: Mm-hm. Not that I don't think I've done as best as I ever could with what abilities I have. I'm very happy and I've done more than I've ever dreamed I would do. Things have happened to me that I never dreamed of, and so I'll die content, as far as that goes. But there's still a big world out there that I don't know anything about and I'm married now to a woman who loves to travel and I'm thinking, Gosh, maybe there is more. And of course, I'm not very well educated so maybe I should get back to school and learn how to speak French or something like that, or go to Cambridge. There are just so many things that I could be doing.

And after you've had heart surgery, too, and were on the brink of dying at 58 and you begin to wonder, then, too. How do I know when the arteries are going to close over and *bang*, it's all over. Do I just want to sit here and just draw another daily strip?

MARSCHALL: *Sparky, this is my last question. On your heart operation, you did one of the tenderest continuities you've ever done after that. That's the only word I can find. I was different than other things, but it wasn't out of step with the strip.*

SCHULZ: That was where Charlie Brown was in the hospital?

MARSCHALL: *Charlie Brown was in the hospital and it was like a composer shifting to a minor key for a while. You survived a quadruple bypass?*

SCHULZ: Yes. That's like what I was telling you about coming home from the Army and suddenly, I'm a man, you know. I've done this and I'm feeling good about myself. I thought, "Boy, I don't want to go to the hospital, they're going to saw my chest open. I'm not that brave. I don't want to go any place. I don't want to do anything. I don't know if I can stand this." But I remember my kids saying "But you'd better do this, dad, if you want to play tennis and hockey again. You'd better do it." And I went to the surgery and they explained what they did and they said, "It doesn't hurt when they saw your chest in half. It doesn't hurt at all." Well, [my wife] Jeannie and I thought about it for a couple of months. So I did it and I thought, "Boy, if I do this, I'll really feel good about myself." But that first night in the hospital, when they take you in and they take away all your clothes and you've got to take a shower and they come in and give you a pill, I thought, "Do I want to do this?" I've gotten on airplanes and I've gotten off before the plane has taken off because I didn't want to travel, I've backed out of things for years. I said, "I could get my clothes now and I could go home. I don't have to do this. I could go home and just take it easy and maybe survive, but I'll make a complete fool out of myself if I do it and my wife will be ashamed of me and my kids will be ashamed of me." So I went to sleep and the next morning, it all happened. So I thought, "Boy, if I survive this, I'll feel great." But I'm still the same person now [*laughter*] that I always was. It didn't change me much. I still had the same fears I've always had. But if you don't have the surgery—I've talked to other guys—every time you go to sleep at night, you wonder if you're going to wake up in the morning. If you go away, if you go to New York and you're in a hotel room and maybe had too much to eat or something that night, your stomach is feeling kind of funny and you twist and you wonder, "Is this the night that last artery closes?" You can't live that way, which is why I decided to go ahead to do it. I've never put in my years that I promised that I would put in.

MARSCHALL: *Promised to whom?*

SCHULZ: The syndicate president, when he took over—see, I was ready to quit—we argued with the president for almost three years over what was going to happen. I said, "I want to own this thing. I'm tired of you selling Charlie Brown razor blades in Germany without telling me. I want to be able to do what I want to do and I don't want you doing anything but the strip. Either I get my way, or I'm going to quit." This guy, he couldn't understand it at all. "You make more money than everybody else. You've got more." I said, "Yeah, but I *earn* more, I've done more. You see, I don't want more money. I just want control so you guys don't ruin it." Well, fortunately, he retired. [His successor] came in and he and I sat down and within five minutes, he could see how sensitive it was. All I was asking is that they don't ruin it.

GROTH: *Mr. Schulz, if you were as militant about controlling the strip as that, why wouldn't you be similarily militant about newspapers running it large?*

SCHULZ: Because of what I said before: I don't think it's fair for me to dictate to the editors who are really my customers. And because so many of them, for so many years, like the *The Chronicle*, run it in the same place for 35 years now and suddenly, to force them to change the whole thing around just because I want more space, I just think that would be too egotistical.

But if it's something that I really want, I'll go for it. I never quit, too.

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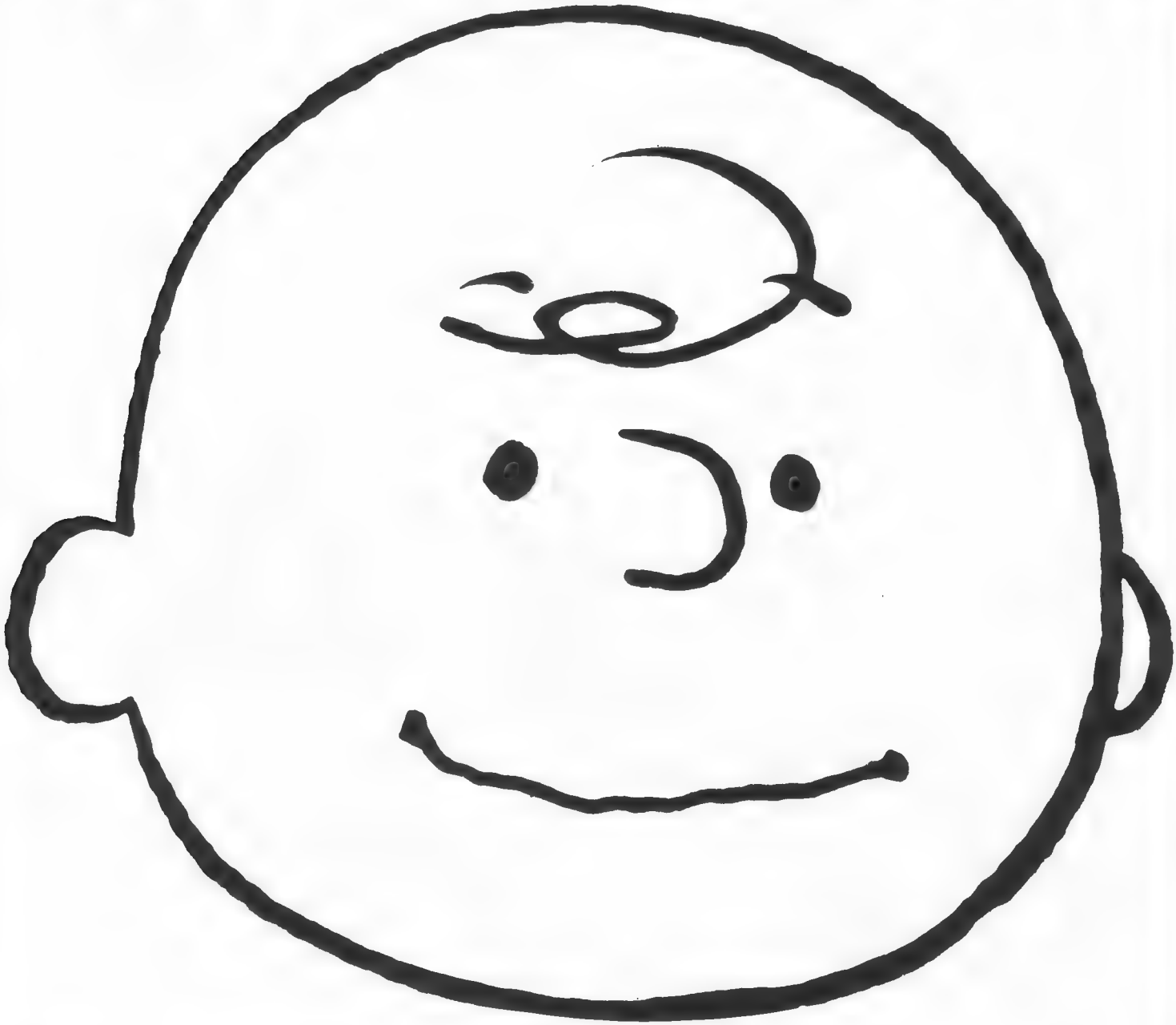
THE SCHULZ



Why *Peanuts* Works

by Thierry Groensteen

AN INTELLECTUAL STRIP

In the histories of the comic strip (and Rick Marschall echoes this in the accompanying interview), Charles Schulz is regarded as one of the founders of a new trend in comic strips, that of the "intellectual strips." Other descriptions have been used to identify this trend, such as "sophisticated strips," "sick humor," abstract comedy, even metaphysical humor.

However appropriate these terms may be, *Peanuts* preceded almost all of the other strips that might fit this description. The only precursor (and not by much) that could be included would be *Pogo*, Walt Kelly's "continuity strip." Even though they were created almost at the same time as *Peanuts*, *Dennis the Menace* and *Beetle Bailey* are not members of the same family. The trend became apparent in the second half of the '50s with *Feiffer* (1956), *Andy Capp* (1957), *Miss Peach* (1957), and *B.C.* (1958), and became a permanent fixture during the course of the following decade with *Bristow* (1962), *Wizard of Id* (1964), and *Mafalda*, to cite just the best-known strips.

It is not easy to compose a strict definition that would allow one to distinguish intellectual strips from the others. An article on "intellectual humor" appeared in *L'Encyclopedie des bandes dessinees* (Encyclopedia of Comics) (Albin Michel, 1966, p. 140). The article states that most of the elements characterizing the intellectual trend have always existed in American comics, and don't signify any particular departure from what had gone before. For example, "The variations on a theme and the use of rigid formulas characterize even *Blondie*, while a hint of the absurd is an established feature of the nonsense tradition."

Other elements cited in the article include "a non-realistic art style with little background, at the extreme not far from simple graffiti; a strong preference for. . . parable and 'philosophical' reflection; whether acknowledged or not, a psychoanalytical basis; and, finally, in many cases, the selection of microsocieties outside the mainstream."

It is no doubt possible to go even further in analyzing these components. For the moment, it will be enough to make three observations.

a) The recourse to "fixed schemes" (constant point of view) and the use of purely schematic graphics are two different things. But they can be interpreted in the sense of a rejection of the visual drama, even a rejection of visual charm or appeal. As for the drawing style itself, an austerity of form —realistic for Feiffer and Brant Parker, more relative with Schulz—is naturally perceived as a wish to increase the "message." The schematic graphics, incidentally, are reminiscent of the political cartoon, a drawing full of meanings if there ever was one. In sum, following a logic close to that of the seesaw, the reader is justified in believing that what he loses in visual drama, he makes up in moral and intellectual depth.

b) There is absurdity and then there is absurdity. The tradition of "non-sense" in comics traces its roots back to burlesque, remaining strongly tied to objects and the difficulties people encounter in trying to make those objects submit to their will. The opposite of this *mechanical* absurdity or logic we can term *existential* absurdity, which prevails in the so-called intellectual strips. When all is said and done, it is the absurdity of the human condition that informs strips like *Feiffer, Peanuts*, and *Mafalda*; the first two claim to amuse us by depicting our neuroses, the third tries to amuse us by talking about the arms race, pollution, the power of money, etc. To be banal, we laugh to keep from crying: the laugh here is only a cover (or euphemism) for hopelessness.

c) The concern is less to depict "micro-societies" outside the ordinary than to play on the contrast between the frequently serious and sometimes complex tone of the concerns expressed in the strip and the status or the condition of the characters assigned to express them. What is not ordinary, then, is employing animals, children, or cavemen (*B.C.*) as "philosophers" (in the larger sense), all living beings who in principle are less suited for intellectual speculation than for the satisfaction of their physical needs, or their impulses.

Besides the fact that this contrast is amusing in itself, it doubtless constitutes a necessary diversion that renders acceptable to a large public (one that Feiffer, who has opted for a more direct strategy, has never been able to reach) an ultimately depressing view—a hardly flattering mirror.

Please don't misunderstand me: I am not saying that Schulz is hiding some sort of "message," that he smuggles in certain ideas by taking advantage of the reassuring and amiable aspect of a society of children. It is exactly the reverse that is produced: intellectualism is not a foregone conclusion (as it is in Feiffer). At the beginning, Schulz had no ambition other than to amuse us by manipulating some children and a dog like marionettes. But as Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle has noted, "the only theme that can be continually refreshened over 24 hours is clearly that of 'life' itself in its daily progression. . . to know (. . .) the little travails of a small group of familiar characters."

It can be seen that this theme—which actually

SYSTEM

was the way *Peanuts* worked during the strip's first years—leaves only a highly restricted domain open for invention. Moreover, that domain is ground that has already been frequently covered by several generations of kid strips. To be amusing in this domain, children have no recourse but to behave like unruly pranksters and troublemakers.

Attempting first to endure, and then to make an original work that would break away from a genre on the way to exhaustion, Schulz very early showed his desire to transcend the first level of the strip: depicting daily life. To do this, he employed two concurrent strategies. The first consisted of introducing an increasing amount of fantasy into the strip, and thus to stand aloof from real life. The second was to "intellectualize" the strip by showing his characters as having a taste for phraseology and speculation by subjecting them to a more or less acute form of metaphysical discomfort.

In the vocabulary of *Peanuts*, the word "theology" sums up this attitude. And it's the *attitude* that is concerned here: the *Peanuts* characters don't so much pose the great questions (where do we come from? where are we? where are we going?) as treat little problems as if they were great questions. Linus's wild speculations about the Great Pumpkin and a discussion by the same Linus with his father about a bad report card would both, by the same token, qualify as theological controversies.

The *fantastique* (a bad French approximation of *fantasy*, a concept that includes the bizarre, the absurd, the marvelous, and the irrational without boiling down to any of those categories), to which I will return, and the "theology" are thus the two means that Schulz uses to surpass the humdrum routine of daily life. Still, daily life has not been neglected: it still forms the base of the strip, its mooring point. Moreover: the back and forth between reality and fantasy has become one of the principal comic motifs of the strip, the same as the abrupt switch from the grandiose to the petty, from great thoughts to the most trivial reflections. Here are two examples from many:

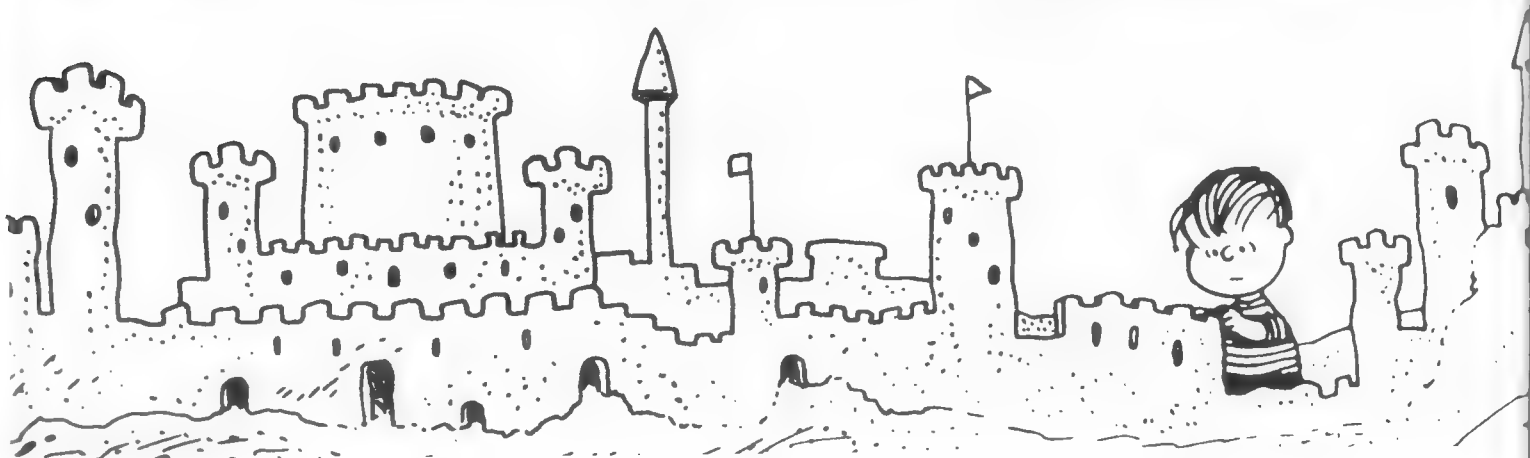
a) Snoopy imagines himself as a World War I flying ace. Perched on the roof of his doghouse, he imagines taking off on a dangerous mission and makes a loud RRRRRR sound to imitate the roar of the motor. Three panels of pure fantasy, then in the fourth, Charlie Brown appears in his pajamas and says: "Four o'clock in the morning. . . how can I explain this to the neighbors?" It's a down-to-earth question that snaps us abruptly back to reality.

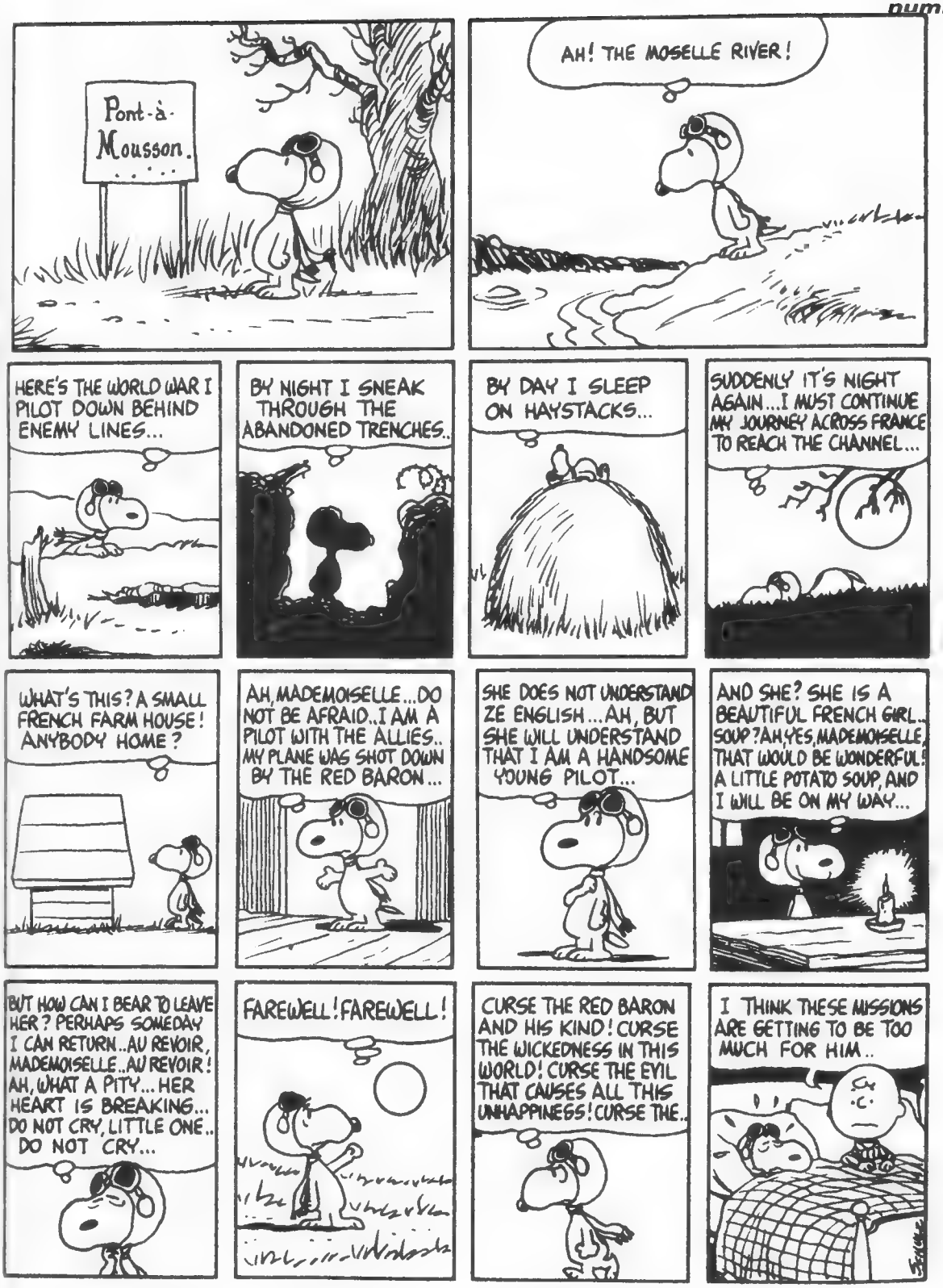
b) Linus walks into the classroom and takes a seat in the back row. When the teacher points out that there are still empty seats in the front rows, Linus replies with a quotation from the Gospel of St. Luke: "When you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher. . .' Every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." A silent panel follows in which it can be guessed from Linus's taken aback expression that Miss Othmar has severely upbraided him. Finally, head down, Linus takes his seat in the first row, and concludes, "Miss Othmar isn't much for Biblical admonitions. . ." This is how Linus leaves the higher realms of theology to submit to the more prosaic customs of the educational system.

Whether or not *Peanuts* deserves the description "intellectual strip," it cannot be denied that that is how it is perceived, by both regular readers and Schulz's own colleagues. In the Sunday pages of October 13, 20 & 27 '68, *Li'l Abner* took a back seat to a parody that transformed *Peanuts* into "Peewee" and Snoopy into "Croopy." Al Capp showed the artist spying on a psychiatrist's sessions for all of the ideas he then used in the strip. The storyline ended with the syndicate firing the artist and hiring the psychiatrist himself to continue the strip!

More recently (1981), Al Jaffee and Wally Wood

above:
Charles Schulz's vehicle for "existential absurdity."
below:
Linus contemplates the Great Questions in a sandbox.




Pont-à-Mousson.
AH! THE MOSELLE RIVER!
HERE'S THE WORLD WAR I PILOT DOWN BEHIND ENEMY LINES...
BY NIGHT I SNEAK THROUGH THE ABANDONED TRENCHES..
BY DAY I SLEEP ON HAYSTACKS...
SUDDENLY IT'S NIGHT AGAIN...I MUST CONTINUE MY JOURNEY ACROSS FRANCE TO REACH THE CHANNEL...
WHAT'S THIS? A SMALL FRENCH FARM HOUSE! ANYBODY HOME?
AH, MADEMOISELLE...DO NOT BE AFRAID..I AM A PILOT WITH THE ALLIES.. MY PLANE WAS SHOT DOWN BY THE RED BARON...
SHE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND ZE ENGLISH...AH, BUT SHE WILL UNDERSTAND THAT I AM A HANDSOME YOUNG PILOT...
AND SHE? SHE IS A BEAUTIFUL FRENCH GIRL.. SOUP? AH, YES, MADEMOISELLE, THAT WOULD BE WONDERFUL! A LITTLE POTATO SOUP, AND I WILL BE ON MY WAY...
BUT HOW CAN I BEAR TO LEAVE HER? PERHAPS SOMEDAY I CAN RETURN..AU REVOIR, MADEMOISELLE..AU REVOIR! AH, WHAT A PITY... HER HEART IS BREAKING... DO NOT CRY, LITTLE ONE.. DO NOT CRY...
FAREWELL! FAREWELL!
CURSE THE RED BARON AND HIS KIND! CURSE THE WICKEDNESS IN THIS WORLD! CURSE THE EVIL THAT CAUSES ALL THIS UNHAPPINESS! CURSE THE..
I THINK THESE MISSIONS ARE GETTING TO BE TOO MUCH FOR HIM..

left:
Snoopy's traumas of the imagination are revealed through Schulz's use of subtle changes in facial features.

tried to imagine in an issue of *MAD* what *Peanuts* would be like if Schulz's characters "acted like real kids. . ."

A GRAPHIC REPERTOIRE

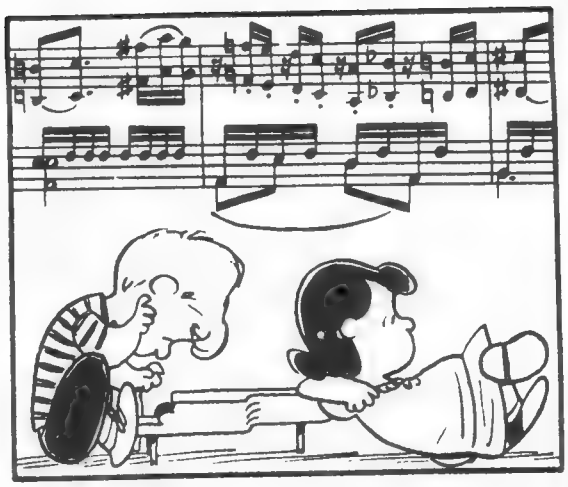
Simply put, Schulz's graphic art is not least extremely personal. His characters can be recognized immediately by their bodily design, which owes little to academic standards. The head is almost as large as the body, and the arms are so short that if held straight up, the hands can hardly cover the eyes or the ears.

To differentiate between his characters, Schulz requires only some "pertinent lines" (to use a term shared by Umberto Eco and Guy Gauthier). Hair contributes greatly to distinguishing them, as do clothes. Thus Charlie Brown can be recognized even when his head is covered by a sack, thanks to the jagged black stripe on his shirt. Anatomical differences are slight but they nevertheless do exist, concentrated in the faces. Charlie Brown is the only

one whose head is purely spherical (his sister Sally's head is no different, but her hair modifies its appearance considerably), Lucy and Linus's concave foreheads mark them as brother and sister; their noses are smaller than Charlie Brown's, Sally's, or Peppermint Patty's, while Frieda is the only one with a pointed nose. Finally, the eyes of Lucy and Linus are *permanently* set off by rings or arc that are a mark of expression when they appear on Charlie Brown or one of the other characters.

The usage of such recurring features is not unique to Schulz's work. All humor artists work this way, which is simply a consequence of the need to *type* each character so that it remains recognizable in all circumstances. But Schulz has gone further in his systematic graphics in that he has gradually assembled a repertoire of gestures and poses that are repeated the same way every time with remarkable frequency. Snoopy lying on his back on the roof of his doghouse, Snoopy dancing with his nose in the air and his arms outstretched, Linus sitting on the floor with his right thumb in his mouth and his left hand pressing his famous blanket against his cheek, Charlie Brown doing a somersault when Lucy's voice startles him... these are some of the poses seen many, many times. They contribute a great deal to the feeling of familiarity experienced by the reader of *Peanuts*, and to the extent they crystallize the situations, their ultimate effect is to be imposed on the reader's memory as so many summarizing symbols, representing in themselves entire collections of gags.

The same systemization prevails in the stylized representation of certain places or objects in the strip. We only see the same side wall of Snoopy's doghouse; Lucy's psychiatric stand is almost always shown from the front; as for the pupils in school and Schroeder's piano, we know them only from the right side, with the seated children always occupying the left side of the picture, their heads turned toward the portion of the strip remaining to be read.

For Schulz, space is nothing less than framing. The artist's "camera" doesn't move around objects. This fixedness of the point of view confers a certain quality of abstraction on objects; they are reduced in the end to a simple, unchanging collection of lines. Perhaps it is precisely this abstraction that lets these objects serve various purposes, allowing

the metamorphosis of Snoopy's doghouse into a World War I biplane, an office, or a supermarket checkout.

In the final analysis, Schulz's graphics are marked by their extreme economy and by their repetitive character. Guy Gauthier touched on these two criteria when he spoke of "idiomatic graphics," which is to say narrative, composed of "discrete, recognizable units" (*discrete* having here the sense of separate, discontinuous) that comprise a sort of vocabulary. They can thus be "compared to the basic units of spoken language." Henri van Lier says the same thing about *Andy Capp* when he speaks of a drawing that is "eminently eloquent (giving way) to *distinctive* units that are almost constant, which remind one of language phonemes, though they are composed of units that are significant, not by their simple succession, like consonants and vowels, but by their positions and proportions."

More cautious than Guy Gauthier, Henri van Lier is, in my opinion, correct in writing that distinctive units in graphics (of graphics as stylized as Schulz's and Smythe's) "remind one" of those of a language, which is less than claiming that they can "be compared." Thus, the tendency of such graphics to extreme reduction must not lead to underestimating the representational part of the drawing, which is not a residual part but its irreducible basis, its actual foundation.

The emotional impact of the drawing in *Peanuts* is measured notably by its silent panels, where the character(s), bewildered, remain(s) momentarily speechless, panels that resound strongly with our own emotional involvement. And by those innumerable final panels that see Charlie Brown turning his round face toward us, where by turns all the nuances of confusion, of despair, are presented. The changing expressions that animate the characters' faces from one panel to the next convey the humor and emotion. That these expressions are reduced to a few lines does not make them any less genuine or realistic. The few representational qualities of the drawing should be credited.

Let's take a moment longer with the drawing to note that Schulz shows on occasion considerable graphic creativity. The famous sticks that make up

right:
The opulent graphic display of Schroeder's music is more detailed than Schroeder himself.
below:
Charlie Brown tells it like it is.

the language of the little bird Woodstock must be ranked at the top of such inventions. They stand out on the expanse of paper like a field of pure design, just like the excerpts of musical scores that float over Schroeder's piano when he plays (at least for those readers who know nothing of music).

Schulz seems to have an artist's eye for written music: in 1966, he had Lucy's face appear between two staffs; in 1970, he showed a cloud of notes sprayed from an aerosol can; in 1974, when Snoopy sat down at the piano, the notes were depicted as a dog's pawprints; in 1975, several gags were devoted to Snoopy's problems with notes that stuck to his back, his snout, etc.

If the laugh in *Peanuts* comes mainly from the comedy of the situation and from verbal humor, other gags have the quality of being essentially graphic. Incurably dirty, the character Pig-Pen is also the source of a certain number of them. For example: when he complains of having sand in his shoes, we see him pour out a bucketful. Or when one of his correspondents receives a letter from him, a small cloud of dust rises from the envelope.

We can also cite the Sunday page from before 1955 in which Lucy, amusing herself by drawing connecting lines between widely spaced dots on various surfaces, walked by Charlie Brown, and drew a line between his eyes, which, in Schulz's usual manner, are depicted by. . .two dots. For the sake of the gag, Schulz has destroyed the representational illusion by reminding us that Charlie Brown is not a real little boy, but a drawing. An even more wily deception was practiced in that superb strip in which Charlie Brown was admiring the altitude that Lucy's kite had reached, which seemed to have gone so high that it was hard to see. . .until Lucy pulled it back down and we realized it was in reality very close and just a very small kite.

THE TWO RHYTHMS OF THE GAG

Since all the humorist's ideas unfold in a series divided into four panels, we can surely assume the recurring usage of a small number of proven narrative structures. An analysis shows two principal types of construction.

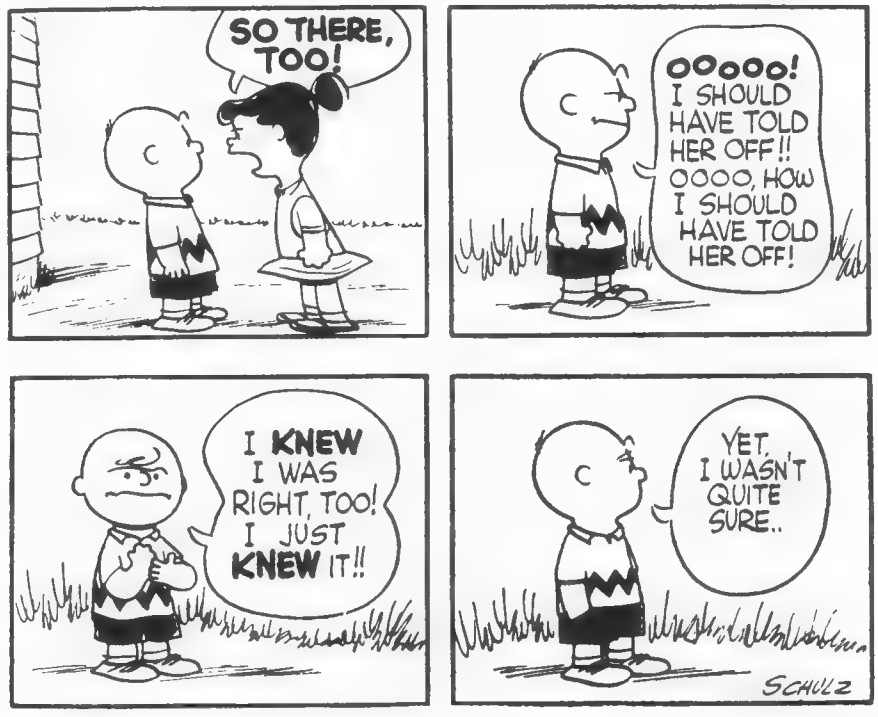
Type A: A situation develops in a logical, progressive, and linear manner from the first panel to the third. The disruption of the logic that produces the humor—a disruption that, according to Violette Morin, we can call *disjunction*—occurs in the fourth and final panel, which performs the traditional function of the punchline, creating an effect of surprise. This type of construction could be called "conventional." As such, it is hardly any different from the majority of other gag strips. Only the *nature* of the punchline shows itself to be typical of *Peanuts*: it could be, for example, a melancholy or bitter reflection, addressed to the reader as an aside, or one of those abrupt confrontations between reality and fantasy that I have discussed above.

One of Schulz's own characteristics is that this punchline frequently coincides with the disappearance of a character (the number of those remaining going from three to two, or from two to one), or, on the other hand, the appearance of an additional character; in the two cases, this change takes place in the equilibrium of the group, modifying the sentiments of the actors present and allowing an explosive confrontation or the expression of a thought that can't be expressed in the presence of another.

In Type A strips, the third panel can often be deleted without harming the intelligibility of the gag. It is almost always a silent panel, prolonging the exposition of the situation in a somewhat artificial manner. The third panel actually marks a moment of reflection or indecision for the character, and the reader can take advantage of the pause to speculate, even for a brief moment, on the surprise waiting for him in the punchline. This procedure is seen with particular frequency when one of the Peanuts is writing a letter. We see him putting two lines on paper, then pausing to reflect with his pencil in his mouth before finishing the letter.

Type B: More original, this model is also much less common (particularly after 1975). It differs from the preceding format in that the disruption takes place as early as the third panel, even if another artist would be in all likelihood finish the gag with the panel where the disruption of equilibrium has taken place, where our expectations have been fooled. But it was Schulz's specialty to prolong the gag by a panel, letting it echo with a commentary. In other words, we could say that the gag produces an effect *on us* in the third panel, and then the character explains his own reaction in the fourth. If the gag was intended to surprise, the corollary has the opposite effect of returning us to the normal, to the already known. *Once again* Charlie Brown is disheartened, Lucy in a rage, etc. The

below:
Charles Schulz uses the third panel as the beat before the punchline.


SO THERE, TOO!
OOOOO! I SHOULD HAVE TOLD HER OFF!! OOOO, HOW I SHOULD HAVE TOLD HER OFF!
I KNEW I WAS RIGHT, TOO! I JUST KNEW IT!!
YET, I WASN'T QUITE SURE..
SCHULZ

world of *Peanuts* remains consistent.

As an example, consider the strip where Charlie Brown stands in a field of snow under steadily falling snowflakes. "I love being in the snow," he says in panel one. He elaborates on the thought in panel two: "Being out here with the snow falling all around me, I feel at peace with myself. . . I feel a sense of security." Suddenly, from out of nowhere, an anonymously thrown snowball hits him in the face in panel three, ruining his beautiful solitude. Gag. Panel four prolongs it by showing Charlie Brown's consternation, the snowball comically perched on his head. He says: "Well. . . almost!"

Despite appearances, these two models do not exhaust the range of possible gag-strip constructions. In *Hagar the Horrible*, for example, we can observe many instances of "delayed reaction." This refers to those strips where enlarging the field in the last panel reveals a part of the scene or even characters previously unseen, retroactively showing that the remark made in the previous panel was funny. So far as I know, Charles Schulz has never used this model, nor any of a number of others that could be constructed by studying the work of other cartoonists.

The strips represented by Type B lend themselves to an amusing little game, or more precisely a trivial exercise in *logical presupposition* that is not without educational value. One can cover the third panel and, by considering the remark made in the fourth along with the situation presented in the first two, guess what must have just happened that led to this reaction.

It will have been noted that the construction of the gag determines its internal rhythm. An important factor in this regard is clearly the alternation of panels with text and panels without. It will suffice to cite the statistics compiled by Ricarda Strobel (op. cit. p 32): Of the 292 strips from the years 1974-75 that she studied, 64 percent had text in all four panels, 22 percent in three out of the four, seven percent in two, seven percent in a single panel, one percent in none at all. (Since the percentages have been rounded up, it should be no surprise that the total comes to 101 percent. . .). We can add that when the strip has one, two, or three silent panels, the final panel always has text. In the 22 percent that have a single silent panel, it is almost always the third one.

Before concluding the first part of this study, I must emphasize that the *Peanuts* collections available in French are disappointing. Some of them reprint only Sunday pages, which are better suited to the European album format, while others (notably the volumes published by Hachette in 1987, whose translation is mediocre enough, by the way), alternate daily strips and Sunday pages, but pick and choose from consecutive strips relating to a common theme, when they don't print them out of order for no apparent reason. The sequential logic, so important in Schulz's system, is disturbed, and many gags lose their flavor.

The most satisfying edition would of course be a chronologically complete one. But it would still be only a lesser evil. Even if serial comic strips are frequently collected in complete editions, the gag strip has nothing to gain in a collected edition, no matter how respectful of its thematic development. The gag strip is made to be read one a day. The 24 hours that have passed between yesterday's strip and today's are necessary to the process of "symbolic capital investment" described above. Being physically isolated but related by memory to all the previous strips, the strip breathes and echoes, it reaches the maximum of its effectiveness and emotional impact. When collected, it is instead less the object of capitalization than of a form of cancellation. The strips are too brief, their linking made too quickly, and they race past the reader who cannot resist the driving force to read one more strip without stopping. The reader is actually more hurried when he can interrupt his reading at any moment, and each strip could possibly be the last one he reads.

Here at the end we can apply to the reading of Peanuts in album form these reflections of Henri Michaux on the flight of ideas for a man under the influence of a drug: "The ideas disappeared without (the reader's) being able to do anything, without being able to stop them no matter how much he wanted: he could not stop them, slow them down, delay them, or even remember one if it particularly interested him. All flowed at the same speed, following the course of an unknown torrent that brought them and took them away. The speed of the thoughts, the images, the desires, all came at a great speed, beyond the influence of his own wishes. Thought he had no need for him to think. It was something that happened outside of him. It left him outside."

center:
An early strip with a more detailed background than Schulz would use in later years.
below:
Charlie Brown asserting his victimized status. Also one of the few appearances of an adult.

X-RAY OF A MICROCOSM

Now that we know how the strip functions, we can listen to what is said and examine what happens in it. I will stick as much as possible to an "objective" description (who is whom, who does what), since I don't have any desire to add yet another universal interpretation to those that have already been proposed, in terms of neurosis (Umberto Eco), a transactional analysis (Ricarda Strobel), catechesis (Robert Short), narcissism and hysteria (the so-called Dr. Benjamin Woodward), and I don't know what all. Except for that of Ricarda Strobel, these interpretations have in common not taking into account the particular requirements of the form that constitutes the gag strip, never questioned as such. What is important for me to mention here is to what extent this Form (such that Schulz has tailored it to his purpose) determines the content, to what extent the content is essentially a response to questions that the Form raises. For the rest, all interpretations are possible and doubtless are of equal value. Let us recall that according to Snoopy himself, the best title for a book on theology would be *Have You Ever Considered That You Might Be Wrong?*

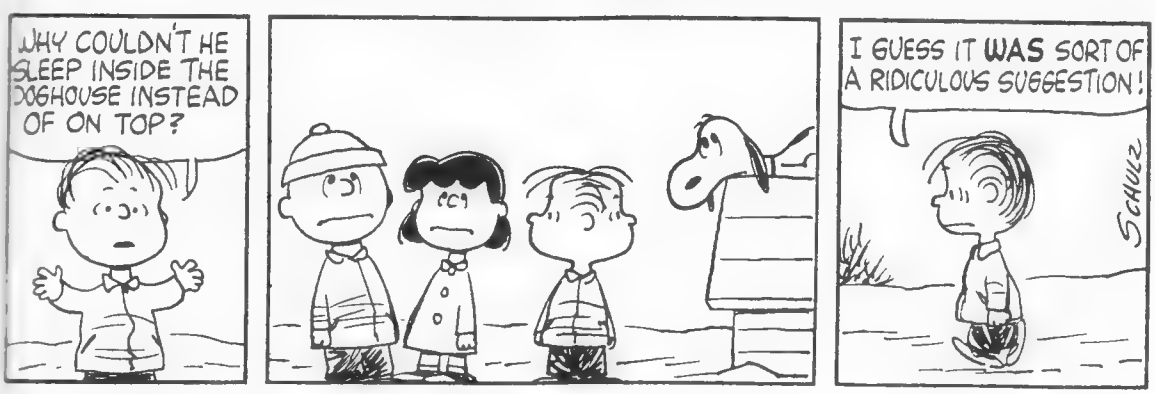
In the interview, Schulz insists on the importance of the *situations*, which he termed "formulas," which he states are indispensable to all forms of continuing entertainment (television stories demonstrate this every day). Most of the time, these situations are directly caused by the character(s) they concern. The Situation is in effect the invariable means by which a character accomplishes an activity that is familiar to him. In reviewing the protagonists of the strip, we will of course describe the principal situations that have made it justly famous.

CHRONOLOGY OF AN EVOLUTION

In the beginning (1950), the cast consisted of five characters: two boys (Charlie Brown and Shermy), two girls (Patty and Violet), and a dog (Snoopy). Schroeder appeared the following year, and Lucy in 1952, soon followed by Linus, at first depicted as a baby crawling on all fours. Pig-Pen also appeared during the first years, while Shermy and Patty soon faded from the scene.

During this period, the backgrounds (and especially the furniture) are relatively detailed; Schulz reduced them little by little to utmost simplicity. Some permanent themes, like baseball and the piano, are in place, and the characters of Lucy, Schroeder, and Charlie Brown are well-defined. But the group still spends most of its time in activities common to all children: they shoot marbles, jump rope, wallow in mud, eat candy, throw snowballs, are frightened by an insect, play cowboys and Indians, etc. Their psychological lives, their questions, and their anxieties are as yet little in evidence.

Sally was born in 1959. Frieda appeared two years later, and was given a cat named Faron in 1962. Snoopy behaved less and less like an ordinary dog. He confronted the Red Baron for the first time on October 10, 1965. Shortly before that, a new neighbor had appeared in the strip for a few weeks. His first name was 555 (but his friends called him "5"), and his last name was 95472. But it was in the wake of Peppermint Patty, introduced in 1966, that several minor characters appeared to augment the group. Some were short-lived (Thibault, Jose Peterson), others more permanent: Franklin (the only black child in the strip) and Marcie (called Clara at first). All came from a more



above: Snoopy begins to chafe under the restraints of his role as a dog.
left: Linus creates humor by rebelling against "The Situation."

densely populated urban area than the residential neighborhood where Charlie Brown and his friends lived.

For some time, a flock of birds had hung around Snoopy's house. One of them, particularly scatterbrained and clumsy, finally eclipsed from the others; in 1970, he was given the name Woodstock. The strip stabilized in the decade that followed, and Rerun (the little brother of Lucy and Linus) was the only notable addition, although other new characters (Molly Volley, or Eudora, for example) tried to gain a foothold now and then.

When the '80s began, the reunions of Snoopy with some of his brothers represented a significant turn in the strip, if not at all a very happy one. Displeasing to some, one notes since the end of the '70s some lapses of inspiration. Without a doubt, Schulz's first serious error was made in 1979, when Woodstock became a farmer and Lucy took up gardening, resulting in two series of fairly redundant gags.

THAT GOOD OL' CHARLIE BROWN

Son of a barber, older brother of Sally, Charlie Brown is one of the strip's two main characters, Snoopy being the other one. Perpetually facing the incomprehension or hostility of his friends, he strives with all his being for acceptance, consideration, recognition, and love. He is filled with no greater ambition: doesn't he dream of being a bus driver when he grows up?

His "friends" like to complain about his inherent inferiority. They are wrong: Charlie Brown (the sole member of the Peanuts ensemble whose first name is always accompanied by his last) is certainly maladroit, but he lacks any malice or envy. Filled with a desire to improve, he is perhaps the only member of the gang to feel ethical uncertainty. Charlie Brown is a pathetic character who arouses our compassion: his good will is *never* rewarded.

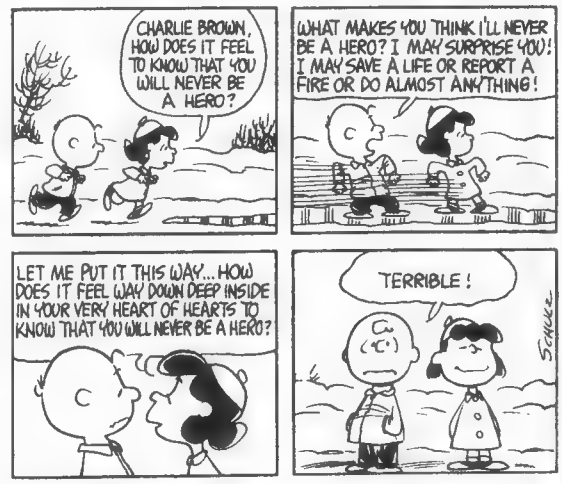
It is as an athlete and as a lover that he experiences his most stinging failures. He manages a baseball team that has never won a single game (except by default of the opposing team). As for the kites he persists in trying to fly, they all crash pitifully on the ground, unless devoured by the "kite-eating tree," or end up in the sewer or a mailbox, or the string is tangled around some obstacle. Charlie Brown counts himself fortunate if he doesn't find himself hanging from a tree by his feet or tied up against the trunk before he knew what happened to him.

Charlie Brown has a crush on a little redhaired girl he has never dared to speak or write to. Paralyzed by his shyness, he contents himself with watching her during lunch periods and consoling himself by eating peanut butter sandwiches. On Valentine's Day, Charlie Brown always hopes for a card but never receives any. Snoopy, on the other hand, is buried by cards, which adds the cruelty of humiliation to his master's sadness.

Accentuating by contrast Charlie Brown's foibles and bad luck is a constant of the series. The other characters are either sure of themselves (Lucy and Snoopy) or downright brilliant. The first time Charlie Brown showed Schroeder a toy piano, and the first time he gave the still infantile Linus a card game, he was humiliated by their innate virtuosity. Charlie Brown, however, has a gift for misfortune.

Deeply depressed, Charlie Brown responds with a heartrending sigh, hits his head against trees, cries out that he can't stand it, and faithfully visits Lucy's psychiatry stand. She doesn't give him any consolation, however, but takes a sadistic pleasure in adding to his misery.

Charlie Brown enjoys a rather better relationship with his father, an understanding man he is clearly proud of. Linus and Peppermint Patty (and Schroeder, but one almost never sees them together) show a certain cordiality toward him, and treat him almost as their equal. Snoopy, Sally, and Violet normally show only indifference or scorn toward him, while Lucy acts like a veritable torturer. Shaken by too many defeats, Charlie Brown has come to the conclusion that the whole world


CHARLIE BROWN, HOW DOES IT FEEL TO KNOW THAT YOU WILL NEVER BE A HERO?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'LL NEVER BE A HERO? I MAY SURPRISE YOU! I MAY SAVE A LIFE OR REPORT A FIRE OR DO ALMOST ANYTHING!
LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY... HOW DOES IT FEEL WAY DOWN DEEP INSIDE IN YOUR VERY HEART OF HEARTS TO KNOW THAT YOU WILL NEVER BE A HERO?
TERRIBLE!
SCHULZ

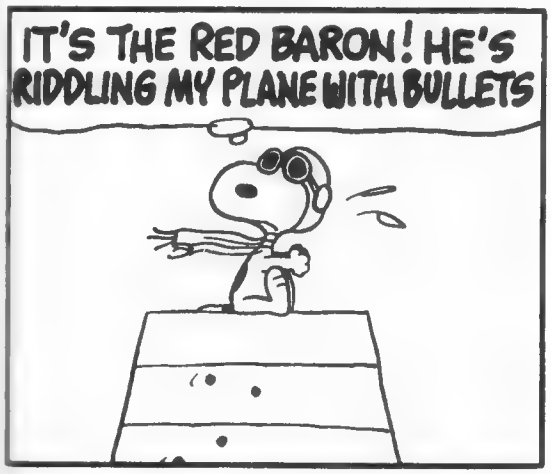
is hostile to him. To his penpal, whom he has never seen, he once sent this letter: "Your are my only friend. Without you, I would be all alone. I don't have any other friends. Your friend, Charlie Brown. P.S. The whole world hates me."

If circumstances make him a perpetual loser, it must be admitted that Charlie Brown does nothing to escape this inevitability. Experience has taught him nothing: he continues to trust those who have deceived him (always trying to kick a ball that he knows Lucy will pull away from him at the last moment), suffering from an incurable feeling of guilt and showing toward all sympathy that no one will ever show for him. One day, he even threw his kite to the kite-eating tree because it looked hungry. And he admits that since Lucy devotes so much effort to wounding his self-esteem, he feels obliged to be affected by it. Added to this secret masochism is the fact that, unlike Snoopy, Charlie Brown isn't able to flee from daily life in his dreams or embellish them with his imagination.

One can compare this character to *Herzog,* the hero of the Jewish American novelist Saul Bellow (who won the Nobel Prize for literature). Charlie

below:
Charlie Brown experiences another "stinging failure" as an athlete...
right:
Our "hero" is tortured by the sadistic Lucy.

Brown isn't as introverted as Herzog; animated by a desire to go against the others, he isn't content with a "conversation with himself." But, like the majority of Bellow's heroes, he is hesitant and solitary. If you wanted to describe him in one word, you couldn't find a better word than the one that serves as the title of one of Bellow's other novels, *The Victim*.



SNOOPY: A FANTASY LIFE

By his breed, Snoopy is a "beagle" (a name that Schulz said he chose for its sound). By his behavior, he is not sure that he is still a dog. If, in the first years, he was content to scamper properly around the children, now and then causing some mischief like any frisky puppy, he gradually seemed to renounce his role. Walking on his hind legs by the end of the '50s, writing since 1965, he obstinately refuses to fetch the sticks that Linus playfully throws, even as he doubtless considers it beneath his dignity to show his joy when his master (whom he calls "the little round-headed kid" when he can't remember his name) comes home from school. "Be Kind to Animals Week" is the only time that Snoopy remembers he is a dog.

His hatred for cats is another survival of his canine nature. The rest of the time, he plays baseball, ice-skates (on his bare paws), and even tries to go to school, often teasing the girls and particularly Peppermint Patty (who speaks of him as "the funny-looking kid with the big nose"). Finally, when Charlie Brown asks him, "Have you ever thought of entering a dog show?" Snoopy imperturbably responds, "Impossible. I don't have a dog."

He loves to eat, and will never miss dinnertime. He also loves to sleep, and has formed the odd habit of not lying down *in* his doghouse but on the peak of the roof. The only dog in the world to sleep on his back, he can trade his doghouse for a tent, an igloo, or the head of a bed without changing his favorite position. More rarely, he has found shelter inside a mailbox, to the great surprise of anyone who comes to pick up the mail.

Snoopy's body is a malleable and docile instrument. His ears can perform any number of functions: they receive certain TV shows, protect Woodstock from the rain or reduce him to silence, and even spin like rotor blades so Snoopy can fly as a "heli-dog." But the same plasticity that characterizes Snoopy's entire body appeared very early on (around 1955) as a gift for imitation. He can be seen aping Violet, Lucy, Beethoven, Mickey Mouse, and the most disparate selection of animals: moose, kangaroo, polar bear, gorilla, dinosaur, piranha, snake. His most successful imitation was that of a vulture, which he repeated most willingly.

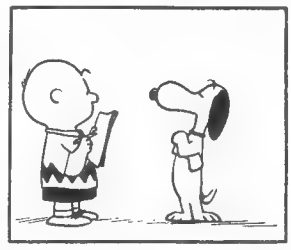
It was of course only natural that Snoopy would very soon pass from the stage of imitation to that of identification, or projection. Everyone knows that he frequently pretends to be a World War I flying ace engaged in a merciless struggle against the Red Baron (the German ace Manfred von Richthofen, who shot down the Canadian flyer Roy Brown in a Sopwith Camel). But we've seen him in turn as a captain of the Foreign Legion, a fireman, Joe Cool the Big Man on Campus, a figure skating star, Blackjack Snoopy the riverboat gambler, a surgeon, a Boy Scout leader, Joe Sandbagger the bowling champion, an astronaut, a lawyer. . .(I'm listing them at random and I'm surely missing some). The thing these different fictional identities have in common is that they correspond to heroic, valorous roles. Whatever his new career, Snoopy has to be the best in the field: even as a supermarket cashier, he would be world-famous ("the world-famous grocery clerk!").

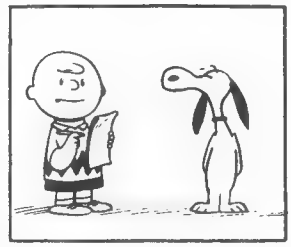
From this it could be concluded that Snoopy never changes his personality: it's the same personality expressed from beneath different disguises. Some psychoanalysts (notably Donald W. Winnicott and Alice Miller) have spoken in connection with this fanatical necessity to identify with the "hero," of the creation of a "false self" as a result of a feeling of insecurity, even inferiority. According to Alice Miller, the desire to shine generally comes from a distrust of the self, the subject's reasoning being: "If it weren't for my extraordinary performances, no one would like me; by myself I'm not *lovable* enough." In spite of his exuberance and epicureanism, even Snoopy would be thus subject to depression.

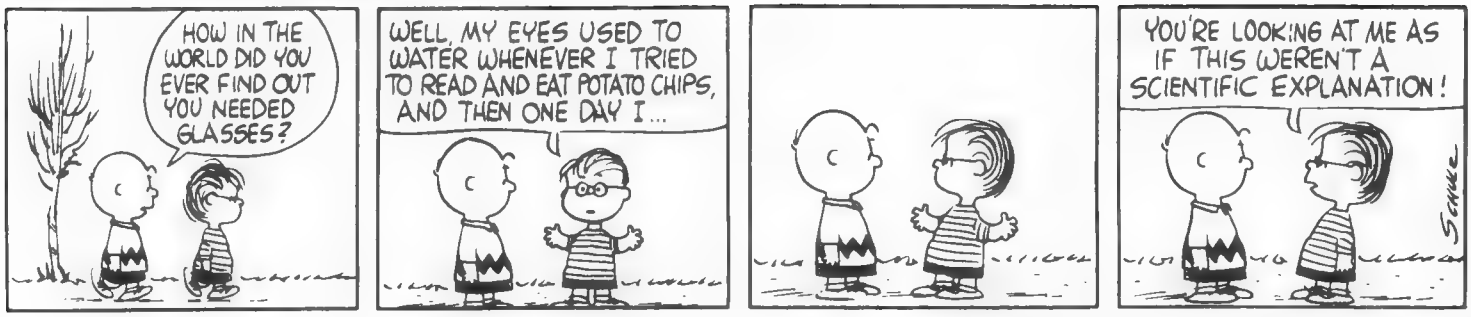
Snoopy is a born actor—doggedly so, so to speak. Schulz describes him as "a mixture of innocence and egotism." You could also say he behaves both like an artist (appreciating painting, dance, music—ah! Chopin!—but showing a deplorable taste in literature) and. . . like a child. Dreamy, capricious, unpredictable, disarming (since the '50s, he has known that "a kiss on the nose" is a surefire remedy against scolding), a great fan of the little bunny stories written by Miss Helen Sweetstory (about whom he will write a biography), Snoopy has not really grown since the time Charlie Brown's parents came to the Daisy Hill Puppy Farm to buy him. Within the *Peanuts* gang, much happens as if Snoopy were a child surrounded by adults.

Finally, for those (notably Marion Vidal and Michel Pierre in France) who have insisted there is an autobiographical dimension to the strip, seeing in Charlie Brown a faithful reproduction of Schulz as a child, let us recall that in the inter-

left:
Mistaken identity: Snoopy. . . or Roy Brown?
below:
Is Snoopy insecure? Why won't he act like a real dog?






HOW IN THE WORLD DID YOU EVER FIND OUT YOU NEEDED GLASSES?
WELL, MY EYES USED TO WATER WHENEVER I TRIED TO READ AND EAT POTATO CHIPS, AND THEN ONE DAY I...
YOU'RE LOOKING AT ME AS IF THIS WEREN'T A SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION!
SCHULZ

view, Schulz evoked a rather happy childhood, the carefree atmosphere proper to his young age unaffected by even the dramas of the time (the Great Depression, for example). Let me suggest here that the happy Me of Schulz as a child as much as the artistic Me of Schulz as a grown artist has gone to fashion Snoopy. If there absolutely must be a biographical explanation proposed for *Peanuts*, at least it should not be so simplistic. If Schulz's personality were the same as Charlie Brown's, he wouldn't have been able to draw *Peanuts*!

To finish with Snoopy, let us note that the introduction of his brothers, which is to say multiplying his doubles in recent years. Marbles in 1982; then, in 1984, Spike, the mustachioed beagle living in a desert surrounded by cactus, doesn't seem like a very pertinent idea. Doesn't Snoopy contain multitudes by himself? Weren't his successive identifications already doubles of a sort that Schulz could have allowed to proliferate as he saw fit?

LINUS AND LUCY VAN PELT

At the van Pelt house, force of character hides deep cracks. The personality of Lucy, the older one, is a balance between two phrases: "I am sure of everything I do" and "I am frustrated and inhibited... and nobody understands me." The assurance that the little girl shows in all situations, her monumental bad faith, and her boundless aggression are her means of compensating for her doubtless deep inhibitions. Egocentric, authoritarian, matriarchal, and utterly tactless, Lucy tyrannizes everyone in her group. She especially picks on Charlie Brown, the most vulnerable person she knows, but also maintains a combative relationship with Snoopy, whose apparent happiness she suffers none too gladly. Her activity as a psychiatric advisor is only a means to exercise her authority and cruelty. Her therapeutic methods frequently have the effect of demoralizing the patient a little more. We see her giving Charlie Brown an imposing list of his most trivial faults, or even putting on an endless slide show illustrating those same faults. For this last presentation, Charlie Brown received a bill for $143, which led him to exclaim, "And I still have the same faults!"

Lucy's lack of education is bottomless, and the lessons that she has long poured out on her younger brother Linus constitute a formidable collection of nonsense. But Lucy compensates for her ignorance with a colossal aplomb that overrides all objections. Once she tried to rub out cold germs with her heel, and we have seen her scoff when she learned that people once thought the Earth was flat, but then soon ask, "And what do we think now?"

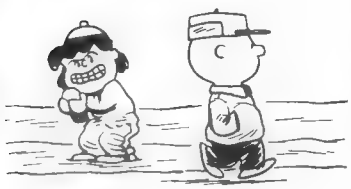
While incapable of appreciating music, Lucy has a crush on Schroeder, the little pianist. Despite the coldness and the sometimes brutal rejections he answers her with, she has firmly decided to marry him so she can spend the fabulous sums he will someday earn as a performer.

Linus possesses the most complex personality of anyone in the group. Since the '50s, when he was still a baby, he displayed a prodigious handiness, succeeding in nothing flat making a house of cards or imposing sand structures, and playing with a basketball like a veteran of the Harlem Globetrotters. These demonstrations were usually made in front of a dumbfounded and somewhat humiliated Charlie Brown. But when he was alone, Linus could tangle himself up in a telephone cord or the elastic of his tetherball.

Later, Linus shone brightly for his intellectual qualities. His love for his schoolteacher, Miss Othmar ("a good teacher, a wonderful human being, and a real doll") perhaps served as a spur for his desire to learn, but in truth Linus is self-taught more than a brilliant student. He excels in New Math (Sally's nightmare), analyzing fairy tales as well as quotations from Shakespeare or the Bible, those last learned in Church School.

On occasion, this child prodigy shows himself to be astonishingly lacking in judgment. For example, when he starts "a club for little brothers like me persecuted by a dominating big sister," he has to ask Lucy to take the floor at the first meeting of the club. And, above all, there is a regressive

top:
Linus experiences the neuroses and alienation of the intellectual.
center:
"Egocentric, authoritarian, matriarchal, and utterly tactless..."
below:
Naked Agression?



aspect in his behavior, symbolized by the famous security blanket, from which he can never part despite his occasional attempts to "break the habit." This blanket, in which Umberto Eco sees the symbol of prenatal peace and purely oral happiness, answers in every way to the definition of the "transitional object" in Lacan's phrase, assumed to act "as a cork on anxiety."

Actually, Linus is excessive in everything. His intellectual superiority over the others, to which is added a touch of power, designates him as the spiritual leader of the group. Asked what he wants to be, he replies, "A fanatic." On the right path to his goal, Linus has tried to found the cult of "the Great Pumpkin," which is supposed to appear on Hallowe'en night in the most sincere pumpkin patch. Meeting only incredulity everywhere, Linus learns to his cost that "there are three subjects that should never discussed in public: religion, politics, and the Great Pumpkin."

THIS IS "SHOW AND TELL" DAY AT SCHOOL, ISN'T IT? RATS! I FORGOT TO BRING SOMETHING...
DID YOU REMEMBER THAT THIS WAS "SHOW AND TELL" DAY, LINUS?
YES, I HAVE A COUPLE OF THINGS HERE TO SHOW THE CLASS...
THESE ARE COPIES I'VE BEEN MAKING OF SOME OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS...
SEE? THIS IS A DUPLICATE OF A SCROLL OF ISAIAH CHAPTERS 38 TO 40...IT WAS MADE FROM SEVENTEEN PIECES OF SHEEPSKIN, AND WAS FOUND IN A CAVE BY A SHEPHERD...
HERE I'VE MADE A COPY OF THE EARLIEST KNOWN FRAGMENT EVER FOUND... IT'S A PORTION OF I SAMUEL 23:9-16...I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN TO THE CLASS HOW THESE MANUSCRIPTS HAVE INFLUENCED MODERN SCHOLARS...

THE GANG

I will pass over the rest of the characters quickly, since they are not as well-defined and appear less often.

Schroeder is a virtuoso pianist who approaches music as if it were a religion. He will play Bach, Brahms, or Chopin on occasion, but he virtually worships Beethoven, whose cult he promotes. (This did not prevent him from forgetting his idol's birthday in 1961.) Charlie Brown gave him his first toy piano, but others have followed since Lucy has destroyed his instrument several times.

Charlie Brown's little sister is the youngest member of the *Peanuts* cast (except for Rerun). Sally is a vindictive little girl, quick to be annoyed. In December, 1985, she went so far as to attack a department store Santa Claus. Vaguely attracted to Linus, she does not share his brilliant faculties and understands nothing of what is required of her at school. Her peroration on March 26, 1972, after getting a bad grade for a sculpture made from a clothes hanger, has remained the most convincing expression of her anti-establishment spirit.

Peppermint Patty (whose real name is Patricia Reichardt) has the charm of a tomboy, and has a complex about her rather large nose. When she first appeared in the strip, she volunteered to train Charlie Brown's baseball team. Quickly realizing there was nothing to be done there, she has since coached the rival team, which has always been victorious. Even so, she has continued to have a friendly relationship with "Chuck," incidentally imagining that he is secretly in love with her. Patty often poses great questions (what is love, what is the meaning of life, what is security), and seems rarely satisfied with the answers she gets from her friend, who invariably refers to the experiences of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Brown. Patty has visited Europe and sent amusing letters to the Peanuts gang about her discovery of the Old World.

Her friend Marcie protects her natural reserve behind thick glasses. The most secretive of the group, she frequently makes disconcerting observations and sometimes gives in to impulses as sudden as they are unexpected (such as, for example, a declaration of love—never followed up—for Charlie Brown).

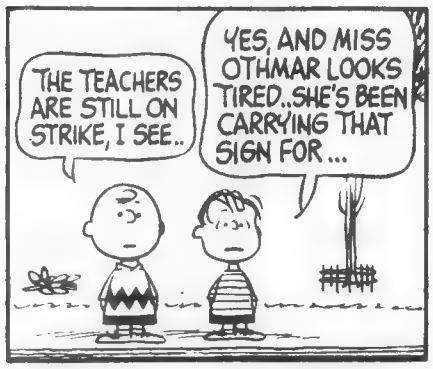
Finally, there is Pig-Pen, a strange little boy who is not content just liking to wallow in mud, attracts dirt like a veritable lover. Hardly does he step outside when his hair is mussed, his clothes are a mess, he is black from head to foot. Whether in a driving rain or falling snow, Pig-Pen always leaves a cloud of dust behind him as he walks. The other *Peanuts* characters are divided between sarcasm and admiration in their regard for him. The picture of freedom and a clear conscience, Pig-Pen is without a doubt the only one without any inhibition, who does not feel alienated by the constraints of life in society.

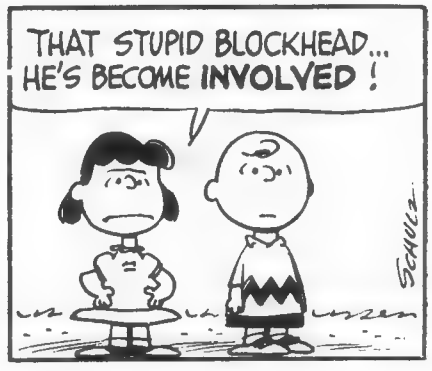
CHILDHOOD AS AUTHORITY

Schulz is far from the first cartoonist to depict the

top:
Linus' excessive intellect creates confusion once again...
below:
Italian semiologist Umberto Eco believes Linus to be orally fixated on his blanket...

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF I WERE TO SNATCH THAT BLANKET FROM YOU, AND THROW IT INTO THE TRASH BURNER?
I'D COLLAPSE RIGHT ON THE SPOT...THEY'D HAVE TO HAUL ME AWAY IN AN AMBULANCE, AND PLACE ME IN AN OXYGEN TENT!
HOW DO I THINK OF THINGS LIKE THAT?
SCHULZ





activities of a group of children. While the "kid strip" is a genre that goes back to the beginnings of the comic strip, kid gangs were all the rage as early as the '20s with series like Gene Byrne's *Reg'lar Fellows* or Ad Carter's *Just Kids*. *Peanuts* distinguishes itself, however, by its firm rule of never showing parents. Not only are they always out of the panel, but the strip that acknowledges their existence is few and far between.

Of course, we know that Charlie Brown's father is a barber, that Linus's grandmother has tried everything to separate him from his blanket, and that Linus has a crush on his teacher (Miss Othmar, dismissed following a strike in 1969, then reintroduced in her new condition as Mrs. Hagemeyer). We know that Charlie Brown and his friends encounter the school principal, the veterinarian, the comics dealer, and other grown-ups. But, for the most part, everything happens as if the children live by themselves, without being subject to any external interference with their activities.

The most serious intervention was perhaps Mrs. van Pelt's decision in the middle of the '60s to forbid television for Linus and Lucy, who had been arguing constantly over the programs.

Mrs. van Pelt later took to carrying Rerun, the baby of the family, in her bicycle's rear fender seat. Her lack of caution terrorized the baby, who felt his life was at risk every moment. Most certainly, this was the closest a *Peanuts* character was shown to an adult, since Mrs. van Pelt was assumed to be just outside the panel when Schulz showed us Rerun perched on the back of the bicycle. Since her proximity is part of the danger itself, could we then say what she threatens is in reality the very premise of the series, since adults on principle must hold themselves removed?

Marion Vidal has concluded that the *Peanuts* universe "being an autonomous world, reflects a transposition of the real world, interferences are by the same excluded: they would in some way 'break the mirror' and deprive the Peanuts characters of their exemplary virtue without adding to the depiction of a society that they are supposed to represent." (*Mr. Schulz and his Peanuts*, p. 24)

Umberto Eco supports a similar position when he writes that "these children are monsters: they are monstrous infantile reductions of all the neuroses of a modern citizen of industrial civilization." In sum, the Peanuts characters take the place of adults and act like them, and their elders are inevitably out of the picture, consigned to limbo.

These explanations doubtless comprise part of the truth. But they certainly lack the nuances. To say that the microcosm of *Peanuts* is a transposition of the adult world is equal in effect to postulating a definition of childhood as the age of innocence and being carefree. It is only when measured by such a definition that Charlie Brown or Lucy could seem "monstrous." Thus, this definition trivializes the serious things and anxieties that, we well know, are parts of child psychology.

The child is a polymorphic being: it is part of the author's privilege to emphasize one of its characteristics over another. For Schulz, the child is a helpless little being, aware of his lack of power, invited to join a society whose logic still largely escapes it, and uncertain of being able to find allies among its fellows. Who among us has not been that child at one time or another?

For my part, I return to the explanation given above: the penchant for intellectual speculation and the "theological" quibbles reflect the wish Schulz had to transcend the simple depiction of daily life. It is inseparable from the other strategy

employed to the same ends: that is, the slippage of many situations into Fantasy. In this regard, the antecedents of *Peanuts* were not so much the traditional kid strips cited above as series like Percy Crosby's *Skippy* or Crockett Johnson's *Barnaby*. Created in the form of a cartoon in 1919 and transformed into a daily strip in 1925, *Skippy* evolved, with a very simple background, into a reasoning (or argumentative) child, cynical and sullen, confronting vexations of all sorts. In

above & right
Adults are usually absent from the strip, while hinted at off-panel.

Crosby's view, childhood was not at all a carefree and happy time; but his strip featured an often acerbic criticism of the adult world, an intention not found in Schulz. As for *Barnaby* (1942), the unique simplicity of its graphics and the fantasy filling the adventures of a little boy and his godfather made this marvelous strip a model that Schulz must have remembered.

In regard to the absence of adults, let us recall the author's very prosaic explanation furnished in the interview: "It is a consequence of the way I draw the characters, positioning the 'camera' at their level." This angle, which, let it be noted, assumes a *child reader*, on the same level as the character, is in effect the only thing that permits the inhabitants to truly inhabit the already limited space of the strip. This progressive adjustment between the space and the characters is also to be seen in the evolution of the furniture. In the early years, when the *Peanuts* characters sat down, they were lost in adult-sized furniture exaggeratedly too large for them; little by little Schulz has reduced the furniture to their proportions, so that the characters have long since ceased to have the appearance of visiting a world built to quite alien proportions.

The absence of adults has had the not inconsiderable advantage of reinforcing the coherence of the strip. It was in line with Schulz's visual "minimalism"; in the same connection, up to the end of the '70s, Schulz had been able to resist the continual temptation to renew the strip by enlarging the number of its components (settings, characters, or activities). Perhaps this is the moment to note that Schulz, all in letting his characters collide in sometimes violent conflicts, likes to recall now and then the solidarity that unites this little group, its cohesion, and, when all is said and done, the power of the ties that bind them. Thus, when Schroeder learns that Lucy has just moved with her entire family (she will come back a few days later), he feels regret even though he has never before shown any concern for her: "I never even said goodbye to her. . ." The same for Charlie Brown: despite his repeated complaints about the indifference his dog shows him, he is depressed when Snoopy is in the hospital and away from him for several days.

This cohesion is equally demonstrated in a negative manner by the fact that the "outside world" doesn't share the opinions that prevail within the *Peanuts* group. In 1973, Charlie Brown had to cover his head with a sack to hide a strange skin disease that made him resemble a baseball. Sent to a summer camp to recover, he will be elected president and will show abilities appreciated by all, finding there his reward for the constant annoyances that are his normal lot. In another year, Linus, too, will be elected president of a summer camp, as a result of an eloquent speech about the Great Pumpkin—the same speech that would get him only sarcasm from his "friends." The laws that govern relations between the *Peanuts* characters are thus valid only for them, and as a group they really do constitute a separate microcosm.

PRIVILEGES

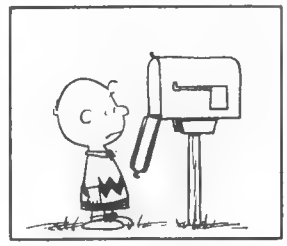
Adults are not the only characters who never appear on stage. The little redhaired girl for whom Charlie Brown pines is never shown, nor the neighbor cat that sometimes inspires fear in Snoopy, and sometimes scorn. For all that, there is no need to call into question the existence of these characters.

Much more ambiguous, even improbable, are the girls that Snoopy, as an unregenerate Don Juan, is trying to seduce. The "babes" that he eyes while in his role as Joe Cool exist perhaps only in his imagination, like the Red Baron or the customers of the supermarket where he functions as a checkout clerk. What we know of Snoopy's mythomania prevents us from deciding yes or no, his "ice-skating flirt" of 1965, always off-panel, has any reality. Schulz doesn't say: he leaves us in a state of hesitation that is itself a part of our fascination. And the day that Snoopy receives Valentine cards by the dozens, are we supposed to believe that he has that many girlfriends—or should we say admirers?

According to Tzvetan Todorov, "the reader's hesitation is the first condition of fantasy," which removes absolute faith as well as complete disbelief. But Todorov adds that if a character can lie, the narrator should abstain. An example of that came when Schulz depicted one of Snoopy's fantasies. One day we see Snoopy on the roof of his doghouse, wearing an astronaut's helmet and claiming to be on the way to the moon, and we are witnessing one of usual manifestations of Snoopy-style delirium. But the next day's strip shows us Snoopy strolling through a lunar landscape: the fantasy has been passed on, verified by the drawing, as in those other strips where flying ace Snoopy faces a map showing that he finds himself in Pont-a-Mousson in France. *Peanuts*—like *Calvin and Hobbes*, when Hobbes, the stuffed tiger, performs gags that are incontestable proof he is alive—has become a pure fantasy strip.

Fantasy is a vein that the strip mines continually, pulling from it many of its elements (which

left:
A "child's-eye view" for the reader promotes an identification with the characters.
below:
Snoopy's luck with women serves to underscore Charlie Brown's failure with them.



makes all the "rationalist" interpretations rather weak). In spite of its modest exterior, we know that Snoopy's doghouse contains innumerable rooms and treasure: there is enough room that all the *Peanuts* gang can gather there, play pool, and watch TV. A canvas by van Gogh (destroyed in the fire of 1966 and replaced by an Andrew Wyeth) has long won the admiration of all the visitors. If the behavior of the lord of this magical manor is a perpetual challenge to logic, that of his friend Woodstock is equal to it. This is a fledgling who subscribes to a magazine, takes dictation, plays tennis, builds an igloo, hunts polar bears, and explores Snoopy's water dish for sunken ships!

The ultralocalized little rain clouds are another of the fantasies that Schulz allows himself. But it is perhaps the animation of inanimate objects that clearly demonstrate his magical power: the kite-eating tree (that can be heard chewing) is the most striking creation in this category, but not the only one. Linus's blanket has been known to shake hands, leap into Lucy's face, and fold itself and fly like a paper airplane. The school building itself has been humanized, since it can be heard responding to Sally (in 1974).

IT IS THE STORY OF SPEAKING

As I approach the end of this study, I have yet to discuss the verbal composition of *Peanuts*. Since I lack the space to develop the subject, I refer the reader to the pertinent remarks of Marion Vidal (op. cit., pp 29-31) on the vocabulary used by Schulz's characters, which is at the same time simple, precise, varied, and often original, and to Robert Short for quotations and religious allusions in particular.

However, verbal language is not the only natural means of communication between the *Peanuts* characters, it is also the point of many of their activities. The characters write a great deal in *Peanuts*: schoolwork, correspondence (letter to parents, Santa Claus, the little redhaired girl, the penpal, and others), and even . . . literature. Sometimes the written text is read out loud by its author or recipient, sometimes it is written out above its author, and sometimes it is even at the bottom of the panel, as the situation calls for it.

As for Snoopy's literary attempts, Harry Morgan informs me that the phrase he generally uses to open his novels ("It was a dark and stormy night . . .") is the first line of the novel *Paul Clifford* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. There is now an annual bad writing competition in the United States called the Bulwer-Lytton Contest. This shows the literary level that Schulz ascribes to Snoopy. . .

THE ORDER OF THINGS

Iznogoud will never be the caliph in the caliph's place. Asterix's village will never be conquered by the Romans. What allows a comic strip to endure, to remain itself while changing its stock of situations, and ensuring forever the reader's cooperation, is a certain sense of *inevitability*.

More systematically than any other, Schulz's work is a perfect illustration of this principle. The brevity and the multiplicity of the episodes, characteristics of the gag strip, lend themselves, to avoid spreading them thin and provide the means of a continual internal renewal, to be structurally organized in function of a periodicity in part determined by the creator, in part imposed by the calendar. The punctuality of the daily rendezvous with the reader makes him not only an observer of the events within the strip but also someone the characters can address directly, a presence that they call to witness the results of their efforts. In the last case, Charlie Brown frequently looks the reader in the eyes.

Only a dialectic between permanence and variation (or, if one prefers, between stability and change) allows the gag strip to put its limitations to advantage. If the variation arouses interest, the permanence gives the reader the pleasure of encountering something familiar once more, and the gift of competence that is the best of the rewards of loyalty. The astute reader is not satisfied with putting names to the characters, not even with knowing that Lucy is Linus's sister; he savors *Peanuts* like a theater buff enjoying a new interpretation of a repertory classic, knowing where the comic effects will come in, and which verses to listen to.

The *Peanuts* repertoire is all the situation whose outcome will never change. The baseball team will always lose, Charlie Brown will never succeed in flying his kites, Lucy will never seduce Schroeder,

below:
Charlie Brown's difficulties with kites can taken on a grotesque dimension.

AAUGH!
IT'S A STORY I'VE BEEN READING CALLED "THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM" BY POE, AND IT'S ABOUT THIS MAN, SEE, WHO IS A PRISONER....
HE'S TIED TO A TABLE, AND THIS BIG PENDULUM KEEPS SWINGING BACK AND FORTH ABOVE HIM, GETTING NEARER AND NEARER...
IT SOUNDS LIKE AN EXCITING STORY.. I'LL HAVE TO READ IT..
I THINK YOU'D ENJOY IT.. I REALLY DO...
THAT EDGAR ALLAN POE WAS A RIOT..
SCHULZ

and so on. In a sense, the characters themselves have ceased to be fooled by their efforts. As a result, you think, they must know the inevitable outcome. One of them will sometimes say "I should know better" after each confirmation of futility. The frequently bitter tone of the strip comes from that of protagonists who rarely struggle against the injustice of fate. They are instead resigned, disillusioned. Isn't childhood the time when one learns to understand how things really are?

The indifference that the characters frequently show (Linus, Lucy, and Snoopy walk past in succession as Charlie Brown hangs upside down from a tree, tangled in his own kite string, and it doesn't occur to them to free him) is not always as paradoxical as it seems; it is also an expression of fatalism, of submitting to the order of things.

In the mid-'60s, a series of gags allowed Linus to prove his ability to predict what adults would say or do no matter what the circumstances. For example, try the experiment of asking them why there's a Father's Day, a Mother's Day, but not a Children's Day, and they will reply, "Every day is Children's Day." It never fails. It's part of the way things are.

WE'RE SURE BUILDING UP A BIG LEAD IN THIS GAME, CHARLIE BROWN..
I'LL SAY WE ARE! WE'VE GOT THIS GAME COLD..WE CAN'T LOSE!
THE ONLY THING THAT COULD KEEP US FROM WINNING TODAY WOULD BE TO HAVE THE GAME RAINED OUT!
I CAN'T STAND IT!

In truth, the whole world must be predictable once its general principles are known. Snoopy justifies his most grandiose pretensions with sweeping generalizations. His responsibility is no longer an issue: he must obey the instinct of his breed, the rule of the company. "We hockey players don't like unpleasant remarks." "We figure skaters are very sensitive." "We baseball coaches can't stand locker room gossip." "We prairie dogs are very affectionate." And so on. You should have known. You would have known if you had been reading *Peanuts* all along.

The way things are agrees with the internal logic of the strip. And this logic is essentially composed of the totality of responses imagined by Schulz to satisfy the imperatives of the specific Form that is the comic strip. All the superficial, psychoanalytical, sociological, or mystical explanations must give way before that fact.

From this perspective, many gags change their appearance if one compares them with the same situations that the scenarist/artist depicted early on in the strip, and with the relationships he established at their creation. We have seen how the physical threat that Mrs. van Pelt presents to Rerun is a manifestation of the threat that the proximity of an adult makes on the very premise of the strip. If Schroeder and Linus and Sally were babies at first and then caught up with the older characters, it is because their birth coincided with Schulz's invention of them, that they were introduced in the strip as new elements, their depiction still only appropriate, destined to evolve to their true personality.

As could be expected, this "reflexive" dimension of the strip has been amplified in the last few years. In November, 1980, we saw Charlie Brown finding the trail of Patty and Marcie by following some comics pages scattered in the snow. During the same period, Snoopy pretended to be a census taker and in this role took inventory of the *Peanuts* cast. In 1986, the creation of the character of Tapioca Pudding, daughter of a marketing king, is Schulz's implicit response to criticisms of the commercial exploitation of *Peanuts*. The same year, the creator's moment of humor or boredom translated into a cannonball that successively demolished Snoopy's doghouse, Lucy's psychiatric stand, and Schroeder's piano.

Reconstruction posed no problems. A strip like *Peanuts* is built on a foundation that will stand up to anything.

—Thierry Groensteen

A PANEL DISAPPEARS

Beware of leap years! On February 29, 1988, the millions of *Peanuts* readers noticed that their favorite strip no longer appeared in the traditional four equal-sized panels but in three. Actually, the form of *Peanuts* had become free: on some days, the strip consisted of just two panels or even one.

Despite a visible discomfort (on March 11, the fourth panel reappeared furtively, Schulz not being able to bring himself to put a question and its answer in the same panel), the author got used to a more limited space, experimenting with new procedures. The strips where Sally is at the blackboard reading her report now presented her responses to questions that were not heard off-panel. Before, the girl had the habit of repeating the question interrogatively.

What would become of the humor classics of *Peanuts* in one, two, or three panels? Charlie Brown's funny child remarks, long since raised to the level of witticisms, or Peppermint Patty's malapropisms would remain, but in this more laconic form the characters' remarks would increase in meanness. It was inevitable, but the change is also an opportunity for Schulz to look back on his past. Charlie Brown was recently made to observe to his dog that he no longer dances around his bowl at suppertime. The *Peanuts* characters have grown old.

—Harry Morgan

center:
The internal logic of the strip reasserts itself without fail.

BACK ISSUES OF NEMO

Between 1983 and 1992 *NEMO* has resurrected and reprinted the finest of comics' great heritage. *NEMO* offers thoughful essays and probing, history-rich interviews. *NEMO* profiles artists and their work. *NEMO* is dedicated to quality in the present, via fine printing paper and exacting reproductions.

Readers from all over the world constantly write, expressing joy at revelations and new discoveries they learn through the pages of *NEMO*. Editor Rick Marschall has assembled the finest possible group of comics scholars, critics and collectors in order to pack every issue with great treasures and meaningful commentary. A set of *NEMO: the classic comics library* can serve as a virtual Master Class in comics history!

2. Super *Superman* focus. A rare, candid interview with **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster**, conducted by **Tom Andrae**, with the first two weeks of daily *Superman* strips, and much unpublished art...Also a reprint of the 1933 fanzine of S-and-S wherein "*The Superman*" made his first appearance anywhere!...**Ron Goulart** on superheroes in newspaper strips...**Stan Lynde** introduces the Western art in Sunday pages of **Fred Hartman**...**Bill Blackbeard** on the birth of newspaper strips, focusing on **William Randolph Hearst**...The conclusion of the 1940 Sunday *Terry* episode...Penman of the Past **Art Young**, premier radical cartoonist.

8. *NEMO*'s first issue-long examination of a comics genius: **Harold Gray** of *Little Orphan Annie*...A special portrait drawn for this number by current *Annie* artist **Leonard Starr**...An appreciation by **Rick Marschall**...a book-length mature consideration of artist and strip from several angles by **Kenneth Barker**...**Donald Phelps** provides an essay on the world of *Annie*...**Harry McCracken** offers a biography of **Gray**, fresh from study of the cartoonist's papers...A complete *LOA* sequence from 1929: "A Willing Helper."

10. Merry Christmas! A special portfolio of cartoonists' personal Christmas cards through the years...**Bill Blackbeard** introduces a unique sequence of *Mutt and Jeff* in which the characters recall their own origins...Fantasy in the comics presents **Gustave Verbeek**'s bizarre *Upside-Downs* strip in a generous portfolio...**Shel Dorf** interviews **Mell Lazarus** and offers *Miss Peach* and *Momma* classics...**R.J.M. Lofficier** and **Fred Patten** kick off "Heroes of European Comics" with *Bernard Prince*...A portfolio of work by **Raymond Crawford Ewer**, the American Heinrich Kley...**Allen Saunders** writes on *Apple Mary* and the craft of strip writing.

11. The Gibson Girl on the cover introduces a generous portfolio of **Charles Dana Gibson**'s astounding penwork...**Rick Marschall** offers and appreciation of Gibson...Beginning a regular *NEMO* department is the initial reprint of *Sam's Strip*, an "in-joke" for strip fans by **Mort Walker** and **Jerry Dumas**...**Jay Rath** represents a collection of his *School Days* panels...**Morris Weiss** remembers **James Montgomery Flagg**...a full portfolio of Flagg's classic tramp strip *Nervy Nat*...Outstanding pages from the long run of a forgotten masterpiece, *Slim Jim*, by **Frink, Ewer** and **Armstrong**.

12. **Milton Caniff**'a *Miss Lace* on the cover highlights the issue's focus on World War II's great cartoonists, profiled by **Rick Marschall**...a portfolio of special war art in honor of **J.V. Connolly** by King Features artists...**Frank King**'s fantasy masterpiece *Bobby Make-Believe* is examined by **Mark Johnson**, who presents a portfolio of classics...**Ron Goulart** introduces a full episode of **Jack Williamson** and **Lee Elias**'s S-F classic *Beyond Mars*...Penwoman of the Past is **Rose O'Neill**, with a gallery of her remarkable work...*Sam's Strip* continues.

13. *Red Barry*, a star of the most violent of crime strips graces this issue's cover...From the San Francisco Academy of Comic Art files, "The Mystery of Black Milano," a seven-month episode...The immortal **Tad** is profiled in two contemporary accounts, and collections of *Indoor Sports* and *Silk Hat Harry's Divorce Suit*...**Donald Phelps** considers the Arabian Nights and Boardinghouse Days of *Major Hoople*...*Sam's Strip* steamrollers on.

16. *NEMO* goes literary. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of publication of *Huckleberry Finn*, we present a first-person account by legendary cartoonist **E.W. Kemble** about illustrating Twain's classic...**Rick Marschall** considers the book, the illustrator, the context, and a superb, forgotten strip based on *Huck*...A portfolio of Sunday pages about Huck and Tom Sawyer by **Dwig**...Also a complete sequence of pixilated strips by **George Herriman**: *Baron Bean*, a humanized Krazy Kat...**Walt and Roder Reed** introduce a Penman of the Past, **Joseph Clement Coll**...**Patten** and **Lofficier** profile one of the world's greatest comic artists, **Hugo Pratt**, and his legendary character *Corto Maltese*...Hairbreadth Harry's adventures conclude, and *Sam's Strip* goes on.

18. **Al Capp** was one of comics' great personalities. This issue features his last interview, with **Rick Marschall**, and also contains a hilarious speech Capp delivered to cartoonists on his craft and approach...The great "Bald Iggle" sequence of *Li'l Abner* by Capp is reprinted in full... In Penman of the past, the stunning fantasy and futurist artwork of **Winsor McCay** is featured in a generous portfolio...**Jim Ivey** brings back the Golden Age of Sunday pages as he resurrects the classic "top strips" over major comics...**Allen Saunders** provides a capsule history of the comics...*Sam's Strip* is a capsule history of the comics.

20. On the cover, a vintage shoot-'em-up illustration by **Alex Raymond** of *Secret Agent X-9*—culled from this issue's consideration of the expansive comic-strip ads and promotions of year past, recalled by **Jim Ivey**...A complete episode of **R.B. Fuller**'s *Oaky Doads* illustrates that classic strip's adventure and silliness from the golden Age...**Rick Marschall** resurrects one of the most bizarre strips of all time, **Gustave Verbeek**'s *Terrors of the Tiny Tads*, in a portfolio of Sundays...Bizarre in its own way, *Sam's Strip* continues.

21. *King Aroo* was in a class with *Krazy Kat* and *Barnaby*, and this issue's color drawing by **Jack Kent** introduces a full five-month sequence of the inspired humor strip classic...**Harold Gray** drew adventure strips set in the Wild West, although his cousin **Leffingwell** signed them; a full Sunday sequence, violent and surpris-

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ing, of *Little Joe* in this number. . . **Percy Crosby**'s slum kids were at once funny and pathetic, as a generous portfolio of full-page comic paintings shows. . . A reminiscence of the life as a bullpen office-boy by one who rubbed elbows with **George Herriman** and **Winsor McCay**.

22. A full-color painting by **John Held, Jr.** satirizes comic-strip cliches and introduces a portfolio of his flapper-era Sunday strip, *Merely Margie*. . . A new *NEMO* series begins: Focus on a Founding Father, with a full consideration of **Jimmy Swinnerton**. . . **Donald Phelps** offers two essays on Swinnerton's essence and elan. . . **Bill Blackbeard** uses a Swinnerton biography as a take-off for a consideration of larger aspects of the cartoonist's career. . . A full portfolio offers paintings, cartoons, strips, and Sundays by Swin. . . **Rick Marschall** again goes back 100 years and reports on how cartoonists viewed—and shaped—the debate over bloody labor violence in America. . . A full episode of *Joe Palooka* is reprinted, from 1933. . . Letters from **Jules Feiffer, Bill Overgard, Milt Caniff**.

23. The return of *Little Orphan Annie*—and a kickoff to a massive *NEMO Bookshelf* reprint series—The "Mr. Am" episode of 1937 is reprinted in full, dailies and Sundays, Leapin' Lizards!. . . **Brian Walker** previews a new book with a inside look at *Hi and Lois*'s family history, and a generous family album of favorite strips and Sundays by **Mort Walker** and **Dik Browne**. . . **Arthur Clark**, onetime assistant to **Fontaine Fox**, with many readers for a ride on comics' legendary *Toonerville Trolley*, with many illustrations and rare drawings. . . *Sam's Strip*: He jest keep rollin' along.

24. A special focus on cartooning legend **Rube Goldberg**: Two first-person articles by Rube; a portfolio of his crazy inventions; a full sequence of a goofy *Boob McNutt* adventure; a checklist of his copious life's work; and an exhaustive biography by **Jim Ivey**. . . Also a portfolio assembled by **Rick Marschall** of *Twelve Angry Men*, a first-time portfolio of legendary radical cartoonist from the early 20th century. . . A "guest editorial" by **Frank King**, pre-*Gasoline Alley*, offers cartooning tips for sure-fire success.

25. An important interview with cartooning legend **Edwina** is this issue's cover feature. She talks about 70 years in the cartooning business, her friends and her memories. With many photographs, sketches, and strips, as well as a complete 1930s sequence of her classic feature *Cap Stubbs and Tipple*. . . A fascinating facet of **Milton Caniff**'s career is highlited with a portfoliio of his (and **Noel Sickles**'s) beautiful but frothy comic-strip ads from the 1930s. . . A new department, "Eyewitness to Comics History," presents the first-person recollections of syndicate pioneer **John Wheeler**, with hilarious anecdotes about **Bud Fisher, Tad**, and **DeBeck**. . . The surrealistic master **Gene Ahern** is examined by **Mark Johnson** on a visit to the Squirrel Cage.

26. *NEMO*'s first wrap-around cover features a luscious reproduction of one of **T.S. Sullivant**'s memorable animal parades, and his comic menagerie is the focus of a generous portfolio in this issue; the astounding cartoons are introduced by animator **Nancy Beiman**. . . The once-ubiquitous cartooning contests of yesteryear are recalled. . . **Jay Rath** profiles strong, silent types in an articles about *Henry* and cartoonist **Carl Anderson**, with many vintage examples. . . **Mark Johnson** introduces rare examples of comics' original curmudgeon, *Everett True*, and a biography of creator **A.N. Condo**.

27. **Norman Rockwell**. . . cartoonist? This issue's cover and main article unearths rare, early humor-magazine covers by the young Rockwell, along with history, biography and commentary by **Rick Marschall**. . . This issue also opens *NEMO*'s campaign to petition the Pulitzer Prize Committee to add comic strips as a category for awards. . . *White Boy* is the classic Western strip more remembered than intimately known to comics fans, but this issue corrects the state of affairs with **Mike Barson**'s intro and a full reprint sequence of **Garrett Price**'s haunting classic. . . **Tom Inge** profiles another closet cartoonist: **William Faulkner** not only drew cartoons but used strip characters as inspirations in his fiction. . . A recollection of the primitive days of the chalk-plate cartooning. . . A cartoon depiction of the hottest controvesy a century ago: not a budget deficit but a budget surplus!. . . And a portfolio of probably the weirdest single cartoon series ever created, *Lovely Lilly*, in "Fantasy in the Comics."

29. Fantasy in the Comics showcases **Frank King**'s "flights of fancy" in *Gasoline Alley*. . . **Ferd Johnson** is in his eighth decade of drawing cartoons—an interview by **Rick Marschall & Gary Groth** and a portfolio of Johnson's *Texas Slim* strip. . . to round the issue off, a long episode of *Ming Foo*, a forgotten gem by **Brandon Walsh** and **Nicholas Afonsky**.

30. A portfolio of **Winsor McCay**'s legendary *Little Nemo in Slumberland* serves as an introduction to the full-color reprint series. . . **Brian Walker**'s profile of *Nancy*'s **Ernie Bushmiller**, with a portfolio showing the strip's evolution. . . stunning reproductions of **Joseph Keppler** political cartoons. . . Inevitably, *Sam's Strip*.

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